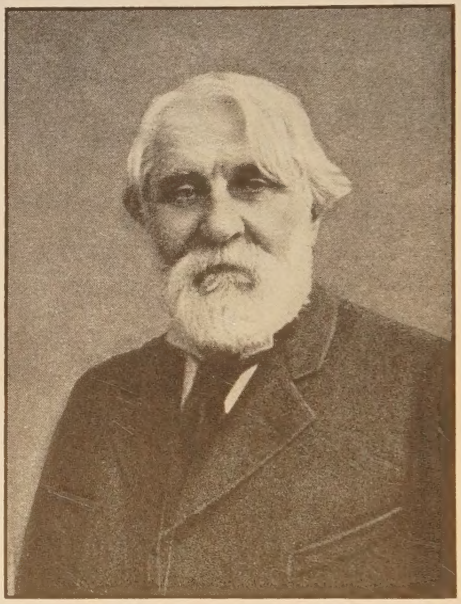
SHORT STORY CLASSICS

FOREIGN

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/shortstoryclassi0001will_v2g2



И. Тургенев

Turgenev

SHORT STORY CLASSICS

(FOREIGN)

VOLUME ONE
RUSSIAN

EDITED BY
William Patten

WITH
AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES

P. F. COLLIER & SON
NEW YORK

Copyright 1907
By P. F. Collier & Son

The use of the copyrighted translations in this collection has been authorized by the authors or their representatives. The translations made especially for this collection are covered by the general copyright

CONTENTS—VOLUME I

PAGE

THE QUEEN OF SPADES
Alexander Sergeievitch Poushkin..... 3

THE CLOAK
Nikolai Vasilievitch Gogol..... 21

THE RENDEZVOUS
Ivan Turgenev..... 67

THE COUNTING-HOUSE
Ivan Turgenev..... 81

THE THIEF
Feodor Mikailovitch Dostoievski..... 109

THE LONG EXILE
Count Leo Nikolaievitch Tolstoi..... 137

EASTER NIGHT
Vladimir Galaktionovitch Korolénko..... 153

THE SIGNAL
Vsevolod Mikailovitch Garshin..... 165

THE CURSE OF FAME
Ignatiy Nikolaievitch Potapenko..... 183

A WORK OF ART
Anton Pavlovitch Chekhov..... 217

THE SLANDERER
Anton Pavlovitch Chekhov..... 223

FAUST
Eugene Nikolaievitch Chirikov..... 231

THE DUEL
Nikolai Dmitrievitch Teleshov..... 263

BOLESS
Alexei Maximovitch Pyeshkov (Maxim Gorki)..... 273

THE LOVE OF A SCENE-PAINTER
"Skitalitz"..... 285

VALIA
Leonid Andreiev..... 309

CONTENTS—VOLUME II

ITALIAN

PAGE

THE LOST LETTER
ENRICO CASTELNUOVO 329

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA
GIOVANNI VERGA 347

THE SILVER CRUCIFIX
ANTONIO FOGAZZARO 359

THE LITTLE SARDINIAN DRUMMER
EDMONDO DE AMICIS 375

LULU'S TRIUMPH
MATILDA SERAO 387

THE END OF CANDIA
GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO 411

SIGNORA SPERANZA
LUIGI PIRANDELLO 427

TWO MEN AND A WOMAN
GRAZIA DELEDDA 481

SCANDINAVIAN

RAILROAD AND CHURCHYARD
BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON 511

BJÖRN SIVERTSEN'S WEDDING TRIP
HOLGER DRACHMANN 547

JALO THE TROTTER
JOHANN JACOB AHRENBERG 567

THE PLAGUE AT BERGAMO
JENS PETER JACOBSEN 583

PAGE

KAREN
Alexander Lange Kielland..... 595

LOVE AND BREAD
Jean August Strindberg..... 605

IRENE HOLM
Hermann Joachim Bang..... 619

THE OUTLAWS
Selma Lagerlöf..... 637

CONTENTS—VOLUME III

PAGE

THE BROKEN CUP
Johann Heinrich Daniel Zschokke..... 663

CASTLE NEIDECK
Wilhelm Heinrich von Riehl..... 691

THE YOUNG GIRL OF TREPPI
Paul Johann Ludwig Heyse..... 739

THE STONEBREAKERS
Ferdinand von Saar..... 793

THOU SHALT NOT KILL
Leopold von Sacher-Masoch..... 839

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH
Rudolf Baumbach..... 849

GOOD BLOOD
Ernst von Wildenbruch..... 863

DELIVERANCE
Max Simon Nordau..... 903

A NEW-YEAR'S EVE CONFESSION
Hermann Sudermann..... 917

BRIC-A-BRAC AND DESTINIES
Gabriele Reuter..... 929

THE FUR COAT
Ludwig Fulda..... 939

THE DEAD ARE SILENT
Arthur Schnitzler..... 955

MARGRET'S PILGRIMAGE
Clara Viebig..... 981

CONTENTS—VOLUME IV

PAGE

THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE
Honoré de Balzac 1007

THE PRICE OF A LIFE
Augustin Eugène Scribe 1049

NAPOLEON AND POPE PIUS VII
Alfred Victor, Comte de Vigny 1067

CLAUDE GUEUX
Victor Marie Hugo 1083

A BAL MASQUÉ
Alexandre Davy de la Pailleterie Dumas .. 1105

HOW THE REDOUBT WAS TAKEN
Prosper Mérimée 1121

THE VENDEAN MARRIAGE
Jules Gabriel Janin 1131

THE MARQUISE
George Sand 1149

THE BEAUTY-SPOT
Alfred Louis Charles de Musset 1185

THE MUMMY'S FOOT
Théophile Gautier 1237

CIRCÉ
Octave Feuillet 1257

THE HANGING AT LA PIROCHE
Alexandre Dumas, Fils 1269

THE DEAN'S WATCH
Erckmann-Chatrian 1289

AT THE PALAIS DE JUSTICE
Alphonse Daudet 1319

BOUM-BOUM
Jules Claretie 1327

CONTENTS—VOLUME V

PAGE

LA BRETONNE
André Theuriet 1339

WHICH WAS THE MADMAN?
Edmond About 1349

THE GRAND MARRIAGE
Ludovic Halévy 1379

THE ACCURSED HOUSE
Émile Gaboriau 1415

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE
Émile Zola 1427

THE LOST CHILD
François Coppée 1471

PUTOIS
Anatole France 1495

SAC-AU-DOS
Joris Karl Huysmans 1515

"BONJOUR, MONSIEUR"
Jean Richepin 1559

THE BIT OF STRING
Guy de Maupassant 1571

THE NECKLACE
Guy de Maupassant 1581

THE WALL OPPOSITE
Pierre Loti 1595

THE ANCESTOR
Paul Bourget 1605

WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE BOY
Henri Lavedan 1639

A GENTLEMAN FINDS A WATCH
Georges Courteline 1651

A YOUNG GIRL'S DIARY
Marcel Prévost 1659

THE SIGN OF THE KEY AND THE CROSS
Henri de Régnier 1671

THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR
Alphonse Allais 1685

PREFACE

WHEN the five-volume collection known as "Short Story Classics (American)" was planned, it was entirely evident that it should be supplemented by a collection of the best examples of the short story to be found in foreign literatures.

The five volumes now offered to the public are designed to supply this lack. They contain seventy-eight short stories, chosen from the literatures of France, Russia, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland—works of importance that have made their mark in the literary world.

The aim has been not only to represent the most widely sympathetic writers, but to select their most generally interesting as well as characteristic stories. The stories have all been written within the last seventy-five years, which has this advantage for the reader, that the scope of the collection may be said to lie within present-day interests.

None of the stories by the following authors appear in any other collection:

FRENCH

Honoré de Balzac, Eugène Scribe, Alfred de Vigny, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Prosper Mérimée, Jules Janin, George Sand, Alfred de Musset, Théophile Gautier, Octave Feuillet, Alexandre Dumas (Fils), Erckmann-Chatrian, Alphonse Daudet, André Theuriet, Ludovic Halévy, Émile Gaboriau, Émile Zola, Jules

Claretie, François Coppée, Anatole France, Joris Karl Huysmans, Jean Richepin, Pierre Loti, Paul Bourget, Henri de Régnier, Henri Lavedan, Marcel Prévost, Georges Courteline, Alphonse Allais.

RUSSIAN

Poushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoievski, Tolstoi, Korolénko, Garshin, Potapenko, Chekhov, Chirikov, Teleshov, Maxim Gorki, "Skitalitz," Andreiev.

ITALIAN AND SCANDINAVIAN

Enrico Castelnuovo, Giovanni Verga, Antonio Fogazzaro, Edmondo de Amicis, Matilda Serao, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Luigi Pirandello, Grazia Deledda, Björnson, Holger Drachmann, Jacob Ahrenberg, Jens Peter Jacobsen, Alexander Kielland, August Strindberg, Hermann Bang, Selma Lagerlöf.

GERMAN

Heinrich Zschokke, Wilhelm Heinrich von Riehl, Paul Heyse, Ferdinand von Saar, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Rudolf Baumbach, Ernst von Wildenbruch, Max Nordau, Hermann Sudermann, Gabriele Reuter, Ludwig Fulda, Arthur Schnitzler, and Clara Viebig.

About half of the stories have been especially translated for this collection, and some of them now appear in English for the first time. Among these will be found some by the more recent writers in Germany and Russia, two very interesting groups of moderns whose work has not received as much attention at the hands of the public as it would seem to merit.

In only two or three cases, where the point of view was likely to fail of appreciation by American readers,

have the stories been abbreviated or otherwise altered; and attention has been called to this in the accompanying note.

The notes which preceded the stories in "Short Story Classics (American)" proved to be an appreciated and even popular feature, and it is hoped that those written for the present collection may prove equally acceptable.

If any one country more than another can be said to excel in the use and development of the modern short story form, it is France. The literatures of Russia, Italy, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, as well as that of the United States, have all been influenced to a greater or lesser extent by the art of Balzac, Gautier, Mérimée, and De Maupassant, for in France short story writing may be said to be based on a theory of art, and to be, consequently, the result of conviction.

This theory of art, apart from the questions of form which it involves, in themselves important considerations, affords great freedom to the writer in the choice of subject-matter and the method of treatment. It presupposes the artist's right to his point of view. It presupposes an audience more keenly alive to life and the manifestations of life than is characteristic of the general reading public in America at the present time. Generalizations like these are at the best unsatisfactory, since the differences alluded to must be apprehended and can not be well expounded; they will have abundantly served their purpose if they awaken curiosity and prompt the reader unfamiliar with the short story in foreign literatures, and especially in the literature of France, to make his own comparisons.

All over the world the literary main current seems to be toward the development of the realism of twenty-five years ago. From Denmark, where the trace is slightest, to Russia, where it is most brutal, the best work is apparently being done by the realists. In France there is a decided reaction against strenuous realism, but it is principally the reaction of a few individuals, and among these the most prominent is Anatole France. He is not any the less a realist, in the sense of being true to nature, because his intelligence is concerned with an appreciation of something else besides the material side of life.

To those who are familiar with the work of Émile Zola, it seems desirable to explain that "Jacques Damour," a really great story, was too long to be included in this collection. An interesting comparison can be made between "The Bit of String," by Guy de Maupassant, and the two stories which it inspired, "The Slanderer," by Anton Chekhov, and "The End of Candia," by Gabriele d'Annunzio.

Even the most casual reader must surely be impressed with the extraordinary vitality of these stories and their likeness to life. It is a likeness that is not always optimistic, it is true, as in the case of many of the Russian writers, for example, but it seldom depends on a misstatement of the facts of experience to create its effect, and is seldom lacking in integrity of workmanship.

I am glad of an opportunity to record my appreciation of the intelligent and interested assistance rendered by Mr. R. W. Howes 3d, in preparing these volumes for the press.

William Patten.

THE QUEEN OF SPADES

BY ALEXANDER SERGEIEVITCH POUSHKIN

Alexander Poushkin (born 1799, died 1837) was the greatest genius among the Russian poets. Though born of a noble family, thick lips and crisp, curly hair showed his descent from an Abyssinian negro slave ancestor on his mother's side. As a poet his work has been compared with that of Byron, of which he was frankly a close student. Chronologically he comes first in the list of Russian prose writers, a list that includes Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoievski, and Tolstoi. "The Queen of Spades" is one of the best and most characteristic of his short stories.

THE QUEEN OF SPADES

BY ALEXANDER POUSHKIN

AT the house of Naroumov, a cavalry officer, the long winter night had been passed in gambling. At five in the morning breakfast was served to the weary players. The winners ate with relish; the losers, on the contrary, pushed back their plates and sat brooding gloomily. Under the influence of the good wine, however, the conversation became general.

"Well, Sourine?" said the host inquiringly.

"Oh, I lost as usual. My luck is abominable. No matter how cool I keep, I never win."

"How is it, Herman, that you never touch a card?" remarked one of the men, addressing a young officer of the Engineering Corps. "Here you are with the rest of us at five o'clock in the morning, and you have neither played nor bet all night."

"Play interests me greatly," replied the person addressed, "but I hardly care to sacrifice the necessaries of life for uncertain superfluities."

"Herman is a German, therefore economical; that explains it," said Tomsky. "But the person I can't quite understand is my grandmother, the Countess Anna Fedorovna."

"Why?" inquired a chorus of voices.

Translated by H. Twitchell. Copyright, 1901, by The Current Literature Publishing Company.

"I can't understand why my grandmother never gambles."

"I don't see anything very striking in the fact that a woman of eighty refuses to gamble," objected Naroumov.

"Have you never heard her story?"

"No."

"Well, then, listen to it. To begin with, sixty years ago my grandmother went to Paris, where she was all the fashion. People crowded each other in the streets to get a chance to see the 'Muscovite Venus,' as she was called. All the great ladies played faro, then. On one occasion, while playing with the Duke of Orleans, she lost an enormous sum. She told her husband of the debt, but he refused outright to pay it. Nothing could induce him to change his mind on the subject, and grandmother was at her wits' ends. Finally, she remembered a friend of hers, Count Saint-Germain. You must have heard of him, as many wonderful stories have been told about him. He is said to have discovered the elixir of life, the philosopher's stone, and many other equally marvelous things. He had money at his disposal, and my grandmother knew it. She sent him a note asking him to come to see her. He obeyed her summons and found her in great distress. She painted the cruelty of her husband in the darkest colors, and ended by telling the Count that she depended upon his friendship and generosity.

" 'I could lend you the money,' replied the Count, after a moment of thoughtfulness, 'but I know that you would not enjoy a moment's rest until you had

returned it; it would only add to your embarrassment. There is another way of freeing yourself.'

" 'But I have no money at all,' insisted my grandmother.

" 'There is no need of money. Listen to me.'

"The Count then told her a secret which any of us would give a good deal to know."

The young gamesters were all attention. Tomsky lit his pipe, took a few whiffs, then continued:

"The next evening, grandmother appeared at Versailles at the Queen's gaming-table. The Duke of Orleans was the dealer. Grandmother made some excuse for not having brought any money, and began to punt. She chose three cards in succession, again and again, winning every time, and was soon out of debt."

"A fable," remarked Herman; "perhaps the cards were marked."

"I hardly think so," replied Tomsky, with an air of importance.

"So you have a grandmother who knows three winning cards, and you haven't found out the magic secret."

"I must say I have not. She had four sons, one of them being my father, all of whom are devoted to play; she never told the secret to one of them. But my uncle told me this much, on his word of honor. Tchaplitzky, who died in poverty after having squandered millions, lost at one time, at play, nearly three hundred thousand rubles. He was desperate and grandmother took pity on him. She told him the

three cards, making him swear never to use them again. He returned to the game, staked fifty thousand rubles on each card, and came out ahead, after paying his debts."

As day was dawning the party now broke up, each one draining his glass and taking his leave.

. . . . . .

The Countess Anna Fedorovna was seated before her mirror in her dressing-room. Three women were assisting at her toilet. The old Countess no longer made the slightest pretensions to beauty, but she still clung to all the habits of her youth, and spent as much time at her toilet as she had done sixty years before. At the window a young girl, her ward, sat at her needle-work.

"Good afternoon, grandmother," cried a young officer, who had just entered the room. "I have come to ask a favor of you."

"What, Pavel?"

"I want to be allowed to present one of my friends to you, and to take you to the ball on Tuesday night."

"Take me to the ball and present him to me there."

After a few more remarks the officer walked up to the window where Lisaveta Ivanovna sat.

"Whom do you wish to present?" asked the girl.

"Naroumov; do you know him?"

"No; is he a soldier?"

"Yes."

"An engineer?"

"No; why do you ask?"

The girl smiled and made no reply.

Pavel Tomsky took his leave, and, left to herself, Lisaveta glanced out of the window. Soon, a young officer appeared at the corner of the street; the girl blushed and bent her head low over her canvas.

This appearance of the officer had become a daily occurrence. The man was totally unknown to her, and as she was not accustomed to coquetting with the soldiers she saw on the street, she hardly knew how to explain his presence. His persistence finally roused an interest entirely strange to her. One day, she even ventured to smile upon her admirer, for such he seemed to be.

The reader need hardly be told that the officer was no other than Herman, the would-be gambler, whose imagination had been strongly excited by the story told by Tomsky of the three magic cards.

"Ah," he thought, "if the old Countess would only reveal the secret to me. Why not try to win her good-will and appeal to her sympathy?"

With this idea in mind, he took up his daily station before the house, watching the pretty face at the window, and trusting to fate to bring about the desired acquaintance.

One day, as Lisaveta was standing on the pavement about to enter the carriage after the Countess, she felt herself jostled and a note was thrust into her hand. Turning, she saw the young officer at her elbow. As quick as thought, she put the note in her glove and entered the carriage. On her return from the drive, she hastened to her chamber to read the missive, in a state of excitement mingled with fear. It was

a tender and respectful declaration of affection, copied word for word from a German novel. Of this fact, Lisa was, of course, ignorant.

The young girl was much impressed by the missive, but she felt that the writer must not be encouraged. She therefore wrote a few lines of explanation and, at the first opportunity, dropped it, with the letter, out of the window. The officer hastily crossed the street, picked up the papers and entered a shop to read them.

In no wise daunted by this rebuff, he found the opportunity to send her another note in a few days. He received no reply, but, evidently understanding the female heart, he persevered, begging for an interview. He was rewarded at last by the following:

"To-night we go to the ambassador's ball. We shall remain until two o'clock. I can arrange for a meeting in this way. After our departure, the servants will probably all go out, or go to sleep. At half-past eleven enter the vestibule boldly, and if you see any one, inquire for the Countess; if not, ascend the stairs, turn to the left and go on until you come to a door, which opens into her bedchamber. Enter this room and behind a screen you will find another door leading to a corridor; from this a spiral staircase leads to my sitting-room. I shall expect to find you there on my return."

Herman trembled like a leaf as the appointed hour drew near. He obeyed instructions fully, and, as he met no one, he reached the old lady's bed-chamber without difficulty. Instead of going out of the small

door behind the screen, however, he concealed himself in a closet to await the return of the old Countess.

The hours dragged slowly by; at last he heard the sound of wheels. Immediately lamps were lighted and servants began moving about. Finally the old woman tottered into the room, completely exhausted. Her women removed her wraps and proceeded to get her in readiness for the night. Herman watched the proceedings with a curiosity not unmingled with superstitious fear. When at last she was attired in cap and gown, the old woman looked less uncanny than when she wore her ball-dress of blue brocade.

She sat down in an easy chair beside a table, as she was in the habit of doing before retiring, and her women withdrew. As the old lady sat swaying to and fro, seemingly oblivious to her surroundings, Herman crept out of his hiding-place.

At the slight noise the old woman opened her eyes, and gazed at the intruder with a half-dazed expression.

"Have no fear, I beg of you," said Herman, in a calm voice. "I have not come to harm you, but to ask a favor of you instead."

The Countess looked at him in silence, seemingly without comprehending him. Herman thought she might be deaf, so he put his lips close to her ear and repeated his remark. The listener remained perfectly mute.

"You could make my fortune without its costing you anything," pleaded the young man; "only tell me the three cards which are sure to win, and—"

Herman paused as the old woman opened her lips as if about to speak.

"It was only a jest; I swear to you, it was only a jest," came from the withered lips.

"There was no jesting about it. Remember Tchaplitzky, who, thanks to you, was able to pay his debts."

An expression of interior agitation passed over the face of the old woman; then she relapsed into her former apathy.

"Will you tell me the names of the magic cards, or not?" asked Herman after a pause.

There was no reply.

The young man then drew a pistol from his pocket, exclaiming: "You old witch, I'll force you to tell me!"

At the sight of the weapon the Countess gave a second sign of life. She threw back her head and put out her hands as if to protect herself; then they dropped and she sat motionless.

Herman grasped her arm roughly, and was about to renew his threats, when he saw that she was dead!

. . . . . .

Seated in her room, still in her ball-dress, Lisaveta gave herself up to her reflections. She had expected to find the young officer there, but she felt relieved to see that he was not.

Strangely enough, that very night at the ball, Tomsky had rallied her about her preference for the young officer, assuring her that he knew more than she supposed he did.

"Of whom are you speaking?" she had asked in alarm, fearing her adventure had been discovered.

"Of the remarkable man," was the reply. "His name is Herman."

Lisa made no reply.

"This Herman," continued Tomsky, "is a romantic character; he has the profile of a Napoleon and the heart of a Mephistopheles. It is said he has at least three crimes on his conscience. But how pale you are."

"It is only a slight headache. But why do you talk to me of this Herman?"

"Because I believe he has serious intentions concerning you."

"Where has he seen me?"

"At church, perhaps, or on the street."

The conversation was interrupted at this point, to the great regret of the young girl. The words of Tomsky made a deep impression upon her, and she realized how imprudently she had acted. She was thinking of all this and a great deal more when the door of her apartment suddenly opened, and Herman stood before her. She drew back at sight of him, trembling violently.

"Where have you been?" she asked in a frightened whisper.

"In the bed-chamber of the Countess. She is dead," was the calm reply.

"My God! What are you saying?" cried the girl.

"Furthermore, I believe that I was the cause of her death."

The words of Tomsky flashed through Lisa's mind.

Herman sat down and told her all. She listened with a feeling of terror and disgust. So those passion-

ate letters, that audacious pursuit were not the result of tenderness and love. It was money that he desired. The poor girl felt that she had in a sense been an accomplice in the death of her benefactress. She began to weep bitterly. Herman regarded her in silence.

"You are a monster!" exclaimed Lisa, drying her eyes.

"I didn't intend to kill her; the pistol was not even loaded."

"How are you going to get out of the house?" inquired Lisa. "It is nearly daylight. I intended to show you the way to a secret staircase, while the Countess was asleep, as we would have to cross her chamber. Now I am afraid to do so."

"Direct me, and I will find the way alone," replied Herman.

She gave him minute instructions and a key with which to open the street door. The young man pressed the cold, inert hand, then went out.

The death of the Countess had surprised no one, as it had long been expected. Her funeral was attended by every one of note in the vicinity. Herman mingled with the throng without attracting any especial attention. After all the friends had taken their last look at the dead face, the young man approached the bier. He prostrated himself on the cold floor, and remained motionless for a long time. He rose at last with a face almost as pale as that of the corpse itself, and went up the steps to look into the casket. As he looked down it seemed to him that the rigid face returned his glance mockingly, closing one eye. He turned abruptly away,

made a false step, and fell to the floor. He was picked up, and, at the same moment, Lisaveta was carried out in a faint.

Herman did not recover his usual composure during the entire day. He dined alone at an out-of-the-way restaurant, and drank a great deal, in the hope of stifling his emotion. The wine only served to stimulate his imagination. He returned home and threw himself down on his bed without undressing.

During the night he awoke with a start; the moon shone into his chamber, making everything plainly visible. Some one looked in at the window, then quickly disappeared. He paid no attention to this, but soon he heard the vestibule door open. He thought it was his orderly, returning late, drunk as usual. The step was an unfamiliar one, and he heard the shuffling sound of loose slippers.

The door of his room opened, and a woman in white entered. She came close to the bed, and the terrified man recognized the Countess.

"I have come to you against my will," she said abruptly; "but I was commanded to grant your request. The tray, seven, and ace in succession are the magic cards. Twenty-four hours must elapse between the use of each card, and after the three have been used you must never play again."

The fantom then turned and walked away. Herman heard the outside door close, and again saw the form pass the window.

He rose and went out into the hall, where his orderly lay asleep on the floor. The door was closed. Find-

ing no trace of a visitor, he returned to his room, lit his candle, and wrote down what he had just heard.

Two fixed ideas can not exist in the brain at the same time any more than two bodies can occupy the same point in space. The tray, seven, and ace soon chased away the thoughts of the dead woman, and all other thoughts from the brain of the young officer. All his ideas merged into a single one: how to turn to advantage the secret paid for so dearly. He even thought of resigning his commission and going to Paris to force a fortune from conquered fate. Chance rescued him from his embarrassment.

Tchekalinsky, a man who had passed his whole life at cards, opened a club at St. Petersburg. His long experience secured for him the confidence of his companions, and his hospitality and genial humor conciliated society.

The gilded youth flocked around him, neglecting society, preferring the charms of faro to those of their sweethearts. Naroumov invited Herman to accompany him to the club, and the young man accepted the invitation only too willingly.

The two officers found the apartments full. Generals and statesmen played whist; young men lounged on sofas, eating ices or smoking. In the principal salon stood a long table, at which about twenty men sat playing faro, the host of the establishment being the banker.

He was a man of about sixty, gray-haired and respectable. His ruddy face shone with genial humor; his eyes sparkled and a constant smile hovered around his lips.

Naroumov presented Herman. The host gave him a cordial handshake, begged him not to stand upon ceremony, and returned to his dealing. More than thirty cards were already on the table. Tchekalinsky paused after each coup, to allow the punters time to recognize their gains or losses, politely answering all questions and constantly smiling.

After the deal was over, the cards were shuffled and the game began again.

"Permit me to choose a card," said Herman, stretching out his hand over the head of a portly gentleman, to reach a livret. The banker bowed without replying.

Herman chose a card, and wrote the amount of his stake upon it with a piece of chalk.

"How much is that?" asked the banker; "excuse me, sir, but I do not see well."

"Forty thousand rubles," said Herman coolly.

All eyes were instantly turned upon the speaker.

"He has lost his wits," thought Naroumov.

"Allow me to observe," said Tchekalinsky, with his eternal smile, "that your stake is excessive."

"What of it?" replied Herman, nettled. "Do you accept it or not?"

The banker nodded in assent. "I have only to remind you that the cash will be necessary; of course your word is good, but in order to keep the confidence of my patrons, I prefer the ready money."

Herman took a bank-check from his pocket and handed it to his host. The latter examined it attentively, then laid it on the card chosen.

He began dealing: to the right, a nine; to the left, a tray.

"The tray wins," said Herman, showing the card he held—a tray.

A murmur ran through the crowd. Tchekalinsky frowned for a second only, then his smile returned. He took a roll of bank-bills from his pocket and counted out the required sum. Herman received it and at once left the table.

The next evening saw him at the place again. Every one eyed him curiously, and Tchekalinsky greeted him cordially.

He selected his card and placed upon it his fresh stake. The banker began dealing: to the right, a nine; to the left, a seven.

Herman then showed his card—a seven spot. The onlookers exclaimed, and the host was visibly disturbed. He counted out ninety-four thousand rubles and passed them to Herman, who accepted them without showing the least surprise, and at once withdrew.

The following evening he went again. His appearance was the signal for the cessation of all occupation, every one being eager to watch the developments of events. He selected his card—an ace.

The dealing began: to the right, a queen; to the left, an ace.

"The ace wins," remarked Herman, turning up his card without glancing at it.

"Your queen is killed," remarked Tchekalinsky quietly.

Herman trembled; looking down, he saw, not the

ace he had selected, but the queen of spades. He could scarcely believe his eyes. It seemed impossible that he could have made such a mistake. As he stared at the card it seemed to him that the queen winked one eye at him mockingly.

"The old woman!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

The croupier raked in the money while he looked on in stupid terror. When he left the table, all made way for him to pass; the cards were shuffled, and the gambling went on.

Herman became a lunatic. He was confined at the hospital at Oboukov, where he spoke to no one, but kept constantly murmuring in a monotonous tone: "The tray, seven, ace! The tray, seven, queen!"

THE CLOAK

BY NIKOLAI VASILIEVITCH GOGOL

The naturalistic movement, which took its rise in France with Balzac and Mérimée, was represented in Russia by Gogol (born 1809, died 1852), who has been called the true founder of the Russian school of fiction. He undoubtedly derived some inspiration from the romantic Poushkin, but, unlike Poushkin, he was of Cossack origin—that is, not pure Russian; he was born in Southwestern Russia, on the borders of Poland. His writings have exerted a great influence on both French and Russian writers. Zola frankly confesses him as his master, and Turgenev has said: "We all came from Gogol's 'Cloak.'" Over and above the constant observation of life on which his work is based, and the remarkable ability he possessed to present his facts in a simple, natural manner, there is always the understanding and sympathy of a big-hearted man of the people.

THE CLOAK

BY NIKOLAI GOGOL

IN the department of—but it is better not to mention the department. There is nothing more irritable than departments, regiments, courts of justice, and, in a word, every branch of public service. Each individual attached to them nowadays thinks all society insulted in his person. Quite recently a complaint was received from a justice of the peace, in which he plainly demonstrated that all the imperial institutions were going to the dogs, and that the Czar's sacred name was being taken in vain; and in proof he appended to the complaint a romance, in which the justice of the peace is made to appear about once in every ten lines, and sometimes in a drunken condition. Therefore, in order to avoid all unpleasantness, it will be better to designate the department in question as a certain department.

So, in a certain department there was a certain official—not a very high one, it must be allowed—short of stature, somewhat pock-marked, red-haired, and short-sighted, with a bald forehead, wrinkled cheeks, and a complexion of the kind known as sanguine. The St. Petersburg climate was responsible for this. As for his official status, he was what is called a perpetual titular councilor, over which some writers make merry and crack their jokes, obeying the

praiseworthy custom of attacking those who can not bite back.

His family name was Bashmatchkin. This name is evidently derived from *bashmak* (shoe); but when, at what time, and in what manner, is not known. His father and grandfather, and all the Bashmatchkins, always wore boots, which only had new heels two or three times a year. His name was Akakiy Akakievitch. It may strike the reader as rather singular and far-fetched; but he may rest assured that it was by no means far-fetched, and that the circumstances were such that it would have been impossible to give him any other.

This was how it came about.

Akakiy Akakievitch was born, if my memory fails me not, in the evening on the 23d of March. His mother, the wife of a Government official, and a very fine woman, made all due arrangements for having the child baptized. She was lying on the bed opposite the door; on her right stood the godfather, Ivan Ivanovitch Eroshkin, a most estimable man, who served as presiding officer of the senate; and the godmother, Anna Semenovna Byelobrushkova, the wife of an officer of the quarter, and a woman of rare virtues. They offered the mother her choice of three names, Mokiya, Sossiya, or that the child should be called after the martyr Khozdazat. "No," said the good woman, "all those names are poor." In order to please her, they opened the calendar at another place; three more names appeared, Triphiliy, Dula, and Varakhasiy. "This is a judgment," said the old

woman. "What names! I truly never heard the like. Varadat or Varukh might have been borne, but not Triphiliy and Varakhasiy!" They turned to another page and found Pavsikakhiy and Vakhtisiy. "Now I see," said the old woman, "that it is plainly fate. And since such is the case, it will be better to name him after his father. His father's name was Akakiy, so let his son's be Akakiy too." In this manner he became Akakiy Akakievitch. They christened the child, whereat he wept, and made a grimace, as though he foresaw that he was to be a titular councilor.

In this manner did it all come about. We have mentioned it in order that the reader might see for himself that it was a case of necessity, and that it was utterly impossible to give him any other name. When and how he entered the department, and who appointed him, no one could remember. However much the directors and chiefs of all kinds were changed, he was always to be seen in the same place, the same attitude, the same occupation; so that it was afterward affirmed that he had been born in undress uniform with a bald head.

No respect was shown him in the department. The porter not only did not rise from his seat when he passed, but never even glanced at him, any more than if a fly had flown through the reception-room. His superiors treated him in coolly despotic fashion. Some subchief would thrust a paper under his nose without so much as saying "Copy," or "Here's a nice, interesting affair," or anything else agreeable, as is customary among well-bred officials. And he took

it, looking only at the paper, and not observing who handed it to him, or whether he had the right to do so; simply took it, and set about copying it.

The young officials laughed at and made fun of him, so far as their official wit permitted; told in his presence various stories concocted about him, and about his landlady, an old woman of seventy; declared that she beat him; asked when the wedding was to be; and strewed bits of paper over his head, calling them snow. But Akakiy Akakievitch answered not a word, any more than if there had been no one there besides himself. It even had no effect upon his work: amid all these annoyances he never made a single mistake in a letter. But if the joking became wholly unbearable, as when they jogged his hand, and prevented his attending to his work, he would exclaim, "Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?" And there was something strange in the words and the voice in which they were uttered. There was in it something which moved to pity; so much that one young man, a newcomer, who, taking pattern by the others, had permitted himself to make sport of Akakiy, suddenly stopped short, as though all about him had undergone a transformation and presented itself in a different aspect. Some unseen force repelled him from the comrades whose acquaintance he had made, on the supposition that they were well-bred and polite men. Long afterward, in his gayest moments, there recurred to his mind the little official with the bald forehead, with his heart-rending words, "Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?" In these moving words, other words

resounded—"I am thy brother." And the young man covered his face with his hand; and many a time afterward, in the course of his life, shuddered at seeing how much inhumanity there is in man, how much savage coarseness is concealed beneath delicate, refined worldliness, and even, O God! in that man whom the world acknowledges as honorable and noble.

It would be difficult to find another man who lived so entirely for his duties. It is not enough to say that Akakiy labored with zeal: no, he labored with love. In his copying he found a varied and agreeable employment. Enjoyment was written on his face: some letters were even favorites with him, and when he encountered these he smiled, winked, and worked with his lips, till it seemed as though each letter might be read in his face, as his pen traced it. If his pay had been in proportion to his zeal, he would, perhaps, to his great surprise, have been made even a councilor of state. But he worked, as his companions, the wits, put it, like a horse in a mill.

Moreover, it is impossible to say that no attention was paid to him. One director, being a kindly man, and desirous of rewarding him for his long service, ordered him to be given something more important than mere copying. So he was ordered to make a report of an already concluded affair to another department; the duty consisting simply in changing the heading and altering a few words from the first to the third person. This caused him so much toil that he broke into a perspiration, rubbed his forehead, and

finally said: "No, give me rather something to copy." After that they let him copy on forever.

Outside this copying, it appeared that nothing existed for him. He gave no thought to his clothes; his undress uniform was not green, but a sort of rusty-meal color. The collar was low, so that his neck, in spite of the fact that it was not long, seemed inordinately so as it emerged from it, like the necks of those plaster cats which wag their heads and are carried about upon the heads of scores of image sellers. And something was always sticking to his uniform, either a bit of hay or some trifle. Moreover, he had a peculiar knack, as he walked along the street, of arriving beneath a window just as all sorts of rubbish was being flung out of it; hence he always bore about on his hat scraps of melon rinds and other such articles. Never once in his life did he give heed to what was going on every day in the street; while it is well known that his young brother officials train the range of their glances till they can see when any one's trouser-straps come undone upon the opposite sidewalk, which always brings a malicious smile to their faces. But Akakiy Akakievitch saw in all things the clean, even strokes of his written lines; and only when a horse thrust his nose, from some unknown quarter, over his shoulder, and sent a whole gust of wind down his neck from his nostrils, did he observe that he was not in the middle of a page, but in the middle of the street.

On reaching home he sat down at once at the table, supped his cabbage-soup up quickly, and swallowed a

bit of beef with onions, never noticing their taste, and gulping down everything with flies and anything else which the Lord happened to send at the moment. His stomach filled, he rose from the table and copied papers which he had brought home. If there happened to be none, he took copies for himself, for his own gratification, especially if the document was noteworthy, not on account of its style, but of its being addressed to some distinguished person.

Even at the hour when the gray St. Petersburg sky had quite disappeared, and all the official world had eaten or dined, each as he could, in accordance with the salary he received and his own fancy; when all were resting from the departmental jar of pens, running to and fro from their own and other people's indispensable occupations, and from all the work that an uneasy man makes willingly for himself, rather than what is necessary; when officials hasten to dedicate to pleasure the time which is left to them, one bolder than the rest going to the theatre; another into the street, looking under all the bonnets; another wasting his evening in compliments to some pretty girl, the star of a small official circle; another—and this is the common case of all—visiting his comrades on the fourth or third floor, in two small rooms with an anteroom or kitchen, and some pretensions to fashion, such as a lamp or some other trifle, which has cost many a sacrifice of dinner or pleasure trip; in a word, at the hour when all officials disperse among the contracted quarters of their friends, to play whist as they sip their tea from glasses with a kopek's worth of

sugar, smoke long pipes, relate at times some bits of gossip which a Russian man can never, under any circumstances, refrain from, and, when there is nothing else to talk of, repeat eternal anecdotes about the commandant to whom they had sent word that the tails of the horses on the Falconet Monument had been cut off, when all strive to divert themselves, Akakiy Akakievitch indulged in no kind of diversion. No one could ever say that he had seen him at any kind of evening party. Having written to his heart's content, he lay down to sleep, smiling at the thought of the coming day—of what God might send him to copy on the morrow.

Thus flowed on the peaceful life of the man, who, with a salary of four hundred rubles, understood how to be content with his lot; and thus it would have continued to flow on, perhaps, to extreme old age were it not that there are various ills strewn along the path of life for titular councilors as well as for private, actual, court, and every other species of councilor, even for those who never give any advice or take any themselves.

There exists in St. Petersburg a powerful foe of all who receive a salary of four hundred rubles a year, or thereabouts. This foe is no other than the northern cold, although it is said to be very healthy. At nine o'clock in the morning, at the very hour when the streets are filled with men bound for the various official departments, it begins to bestow such powerful and piercing nips on all noses impartially that the poor officials really do not know what to do with them.

'At an hour when the foreheads of even those who occupy exalted positions ache with the cold, and tears start to their eyes, the poor titular councilors are sometimes quite unprotected. Their only salvation lies in traversing as quickly as possible, in their thin little cloaks, five or six streets, and then warming their feet in the porter's room, and so thawing all their talents and qualifications for official service which had become frozen on the way.

Akakiy Akakievitch had felt for some time that his back and shoulders suffered with peculiar poignancy in spite of the fact that he tried to traverse the distance with all possible speed. He began finally to wonder whether the fault did not lie in his cloak. He examined it thoroughly at home, and discovered that in two places, namely, on the back and shoulders, it had become thin as gauze; the cloth was worn to such a degree that he could see through it, and the lining had fallen into pieces. You must know that Akakiy 'Akakievitch's cloak served as an object of ridicule to the officials; they even refused it the noble name of cloak, and called it a cape. In fact, it was of singular make; its collar diminishing year by year, but serving to patch its other parts. The patching did not exhibit great skill on the part of the tailor, and was, in fact, baggy and ugly. Seeing how the matter stood, Akakiy 'Akakievitch decided that it would be necessary to take the cloak to Petrovitch, the tailor, who lived somewhere on the fourth floor, up a dark staircase, and who, in spite of his having but one eye, and pockmarks all over his face, busied himself in repairing

the trousers and coats of officials and others; that is to say, when he was sober, and not nursing some other scheme in his head.

It is not necessary to say much about this tailor; but, as it is the custom to have the character of each personage in a novel clearly defined, there is no help for it, so here is Petrovitch the tailor. At first he was called only Grigoriy, and was some gentleman's serf; he commenced calling himself Petrovitch from the time when he received his free papers, and further began to drink heavily on all holidays, at first on the great ones, and then on all church festivals without discrimination, wherever a cross stood in the calendar. On this point he was faithful to ancestral custom; and when quarreling with his wife he called her a low female and a German. As we have mentioned his wife, it will be necessary to say a word or two about her. Unfortunately, little is known of her beyond the fact that Petrovitch has a wife, who wears a cap and a dress, but can not lay claim to beauty; at least, no one but the soldiers of the guard even looked under her cap when they met her.

Ascending the staircase which led to Petrovitch's room—which staircase was all soaked with dish-water and reeked with the smell of spirits which affects the eyes, and is an inevitable adjunct to all dark stairways in St. Petersburg houses—ascending the stairs, Akakiy Akakievitch pondered how much Petrovitch would ask, and mentally resolved not to give more than two rubles. The door was open; for the mistress, in cooking some fish, had raised such a smoke in the kitchen

that not even the beetles were visible. 'Akakiy Akakievitch passed through the kitchen unperceived, even by the housewife, and at length reached a room where he beheld Petrovitch seated on a large unpainted table, with his legs tucked under him like a Turkish pasha. His feet were bare, after the fashion of tailors as they sit at work; and the first thing which caught the eye was his thumb, with a deformed nail thick and strong as a turtle's shell. About Petrovitch's neck hung a skein of silk and thread, and upon his knees lay some old garment. He had been trying unsuccessfully for three minutes to thread his needle, and was enraged at the darkness and even at the thread, growling in a low voice, "It won't go through, the barbarian! You pricked me, you rascal!"

Akakiy Akakievitch was vexed at arriving at the precise moment when Petrovitch was angry; he liked to order something of Petrovitch when the latter was a little downhearted, or, as his wife expressed it, "when he had settled himself with brandy, the one-eyed devil!" Under such circumstances, Petrovitch generally came down in his price very readily, and even bowed and returned thanks. Afterward, to be sure, his wife would come, complaining that her husband was drunk, and so had fixed the price too low; but if only a ten-kopek piece were added, then the matter was settled. But now it appeared that Petrovitch was in a sober condition, and therefore rough, taciturn, and inclined to demand, Satan only knows what price. Akakiy Akakievitch felt this, and would gladly have beat a retreat; but he was in for it. Petro-

vitch screwed up his one eye very intently at him; and Akakiy Akakievitch involuntarily said: "How do you do, Petrovitch?"

"I wish you a good-morning, sir," said Petrovitch, squinting at Akakiy Akakievitch's hands, to see what sort of booty he had brought.

"Ah! I—to you, Petrovitch, this—" It must be known that Akakiy Akakievitch expressed himself chiefly by prepositions, adverbs, and scraps of phrases which had no meaning whatever. If the matter was a very difficult one, he had a habit of never completing his sentences; so that frequently, having begun a phrase with the words, "This, in fact, is quite—" he forgot to go on, thinking that he had already finished it.

"What is it?" asked Petrovitch, and with his one eye scanned Akakievitch's whole uniform from the collar down to the cuffs, the back, the tails, and the button-holes, all of which were well known to him, since they were his own handiwork. Such is the habit of tailors; it is the first thing they do on meeting one.

"But I, here, this—Petrovitch—a cloak, cloth—here you see, everywhere, in different places, it is quite strong—it is a little dusty, and looks old, but it is new, only here in one place it is a little—on the back, and here on one of the shoulders, it is a little worn, yes, here on this shoulder it is a little—do you see? that is all. And a little work—"

Petrovich took the cloak, spread it out, to begin with, on the table, looked hard at it, shook his head, reached out his hand to the window-sill for his snuff-box, adorned with the portrait of some general, though

what general is unknown, for the place where the face should have been had been rubbed through by the finger, and a square bit of paper had been pasted over it. Having taken a pinch of snuff, Petrovitch held up the cloak, and inspected it against the light, and again shook his head. Then he turned it, lining upward, and shook his head once more. After which he again lifted the general-adorned lid with its bit of pasted paper, and, having stuffed his nose with snuff, closed and put away the snuff-box, and said finally, "No, it is impossible to mend it; it's a wretched garment!"

Akakiy Akakievitch's heart sank at these words.

"Why is it impossible, Petrovitch?" he said, almost in the pleading voice of a child; "all that ails it is that it is worn at the shoulders. You must have some pieces—"

"Yes, patches could be found, patches are easily found," said Petrovitch, "but there's nothing to sew them to. The thing is completely rotten; if you put a needle to it—see, it will give way."

"Let it give way, and you can put on another patch at once."

"But there is nothing to put the patches on to; there's no use in strengthening it; it is too far gone. It's lucky that it's cloth; for, if the wind were to blow, it would fly away."

"Well, strengthen it again. How this, in fact."

"No," said Petrovitch decisively, "there is nothing to be done with it. It's a thoroughly bad job. You'd better, when the cold winter weather comes on, make

yourself some gaiters out of it, because stockings are not warm. The Germans invented them in order to make more money." Petrovitch loved, on all occasions, to have a fling at the Germans. "But it is plain you must have a new cloak."

At the word "new," all grew dark before Akakiy Akakievitch's eyes and everything in the room began to whirl round. The only thing he saw clearly was the general with the paper face on the lid of Petrovitch's snuff-box. "A new one?" said he, as if still in a dream: "why, I have no money for that."

"Yes, a new one," said Petrovitch, with barbarous composure.

"Well, if it came to a new one, how it?"

"You mean how much would it cost?"

"Yes."

"Well, you would have to lay out a hundred and fifty or more," said Petrovitch, and pursed up his lips significantly. He liked to produce powerful effects, liked to stun utterly and suddenly and then to glance sidewise to see what face the stunned person would put on the matter.

"A hundred and fifty rubles for a cloak!" shrieked poor Akakiy Akakievitch, perhaps for the first time in his life, for his voice had always been distinguished for softness.

"Yes, sir," said Petrovitch, "for any kind of cloak. If you have a marten fur on the collar, or a silk-lined hood, it will mount up to two hundred."

"Petrovitch, please," said Akakiy Akakievitch in a beseeching tone, not hearing, and not trying to hear,

Petrovitch's words, and disregarding all his "effects," "some repairs, in order that it may wear yet a little longer."

"No, it would only be a waste of time and money," said Petrovitch; and Akakiy Akakievitch went away after these words, utterly discouraged. But Petrovitch stood for some time after his departure, with significantly compressed lips, and without betaking himself to his work, satisfied that he would not be dropped, and an artistic tailor employed.

Akakiy Akakievitch went out into the street as if in a dream. "Such an affair!" he said to himself: "I did not think it had come to—" and then after a pause he added: "Well, so it is! see what it has come to at last! and I never imagined that it was so!" Then followed a long silence, after which he exclaimed: "Well, so it is! see what already—nothing unexpected that it would be nothing—what a strange circumstance!" So saying, instead of going home, he went in exactly the opposite direction without himself suspecting it. On the way a chimney-sweep bumped up against him and blackened his shoulder, and a whole hatful of rubbish landed on him from the top of a house which was building. He did not notice it; and only when he ran against a watchman, who, having planted his halberd beside him, was shaking some snuff from his box into his horny hand, did he recover himself a little, and that because the watchman said, "Why are you poking yourself into a man's very face? Haven't you the pavement?" This caused him to look about him, and turn toward home.

There only he finally began to collect his thoughts and to survey his position in its clear and actual light, and to argue with himself, sensibly and frankly, as with a reasonable friend, with whom one can discuss private and personal matters. "No," said Akakiy Akakievitch, "it is impossible to reason with Petrovitch now; he is that—evidently his wife has been beating him. I'd better go to him on Sunday morning; after Saturday night he will be a little cross-eyed and sleepy, for he will want to get drunk, and his wife won't give him any money; and at such a time a ten-kopek piece in his hand will—he will become more fit to reason with, and then the cloak, and that—" Thus argued Akakiy Akakievitch with himself, regained his courage, and waited until the first Sunday, when, seeing from afar that Petrovitch's wife had left the house, he went straight to him.

Petrovitch's eye was, indeed, very much askew after Saturday: his head drooped and he was very sleepy; but for all that, as soon as he knew what it was a question of, it seemed as though Satan jogged his memory. "Impossible," said he; "please to order a new one." Thereupon Akakiy Akakievitch handed over the ten-kopek piece. "Thank you, sir; I will drink your good health," said Petrovitch; "but as for the cloak, don't trouble yourself about it; it is good for nothing. I will make you a capital new one, so let us settle about it now."

Akakiy Akakievitch was still for mending it; but Petrovitch would not hear of it, and said: "I shall certainly have to make you a new one, and you may

depend upon it that I shall do my best. It may even be, as the fashion goes, that the collar can be fastened by silver hooks under a flap."

Then Akakiy Akakievitch saw that it was impossible to get along without a new cloak, and his spirit sank utterly. How, in fact, was it to be done? Where was the money to come from? He might, to be sure, depend, in part, upon his present at Christmas; but that money had long been allotted beforehand. He must have some new trousers, and pay a debt of long standing to the shoemaker for putting new tops to his old boots, and he must order three shirts from the seamstress, and a couple of pieces of linen. In short, all his money must be spent; and even if the director should be so kind as to order him to receive forty-five rubles instead of forty, or even fifty, it would be a mere nothing, a mere drop in the ocean toward the funds necessary for a cloak; although he knew that Petrovitch was often wrong-headed enough to blurt out some outrageous price, so that even his own wife could not refrain from exclaiming, "Have you lost your senses, you fool?" At one time he would not work at any price, and now it was quite likely that he had named a higher sum than the cloak would cost.

But although he knew that Petrovitch would undertake to make a cloak for eighty rubles, still, where was he to get the eighty rubles from? He might possibly manage half; yes, half might be procured, but where was the other half to come from? But the reader must first be told where the first half came from. Akakiy Akakievitch had a habit of putting, for every ruble he

spent, a kopek into a small box, fastened with lock and key, and with a slit in the top for the reception of money. At the end of every half-year he counted over the heap of coppers, and changed it for silver. This he had done for a long time, and in the course of years the sum had mounted up to over forty rubles. Thus he had one-half on hand; but where was he to find the other half? where was he to get another forty rubles from? Akakiy Akakievitch thought and thought, and decided that it would be necessary to curtail his ordinary expenses for the space of one year at least—to dispense with tea in the evening, to burn no candles, and, if there was anything which he must do, to go into his landlady's room and work by her light. When he went into the street he must walk as lightly as he could, and as cautiously, upon the stones, almost upon tiptoe, in order not to wear his heels down in too short a time; he must give the laundress as little to wash as possible; and, in order not to wear out his clothes, he must take them off as soon as he got home, and wear only his cotton dressing-gown, which had been long and carefully saved.

To tell the truth, it was a little hard for him at first to accustom himself to these deprivations; but he got used to them at length, after a fashion, and all went smoothly. He even got used to being hungry in the evening, but he made up for it by treating himself, so to say, in spirit, by bearing ever in mind the idea of his future cloak. From that time forth his existence seemed to become, in some way, fuller, as if he were married, or as if some other man lived in

him, as if, in fact, he were not alone, and some pleasant friend had consented to travel along life's path with him, the friend being no other than the cloak, with thick wadding and a strong lining incapable of wearing out. He became more lively, and even his character grew firmer, like that of a man who has made up his mind and set himself a goal. From his face and gait, doubt and indecision, all hesitating and wavering traits, disappeared of themselves. Fire gleamed in his eyes, and occasionally the boldest and most daring ideas flitted through his mind; why not, for instance, have marten fur on the collar? The thought of this almost made him absent-minded. Once, in copying a letter, he nearly made a mistake, so that he exclaimed almost aloud, "Ugh!" and crossed himself. Once in the course of every month he had a conference with Petrovitch on the subject of the cloak, where it would be better to buy the cloth, and the color, and the price. He always returned home satisfied, though troubled, reflecting that the time would come at last when it could all be bought, and then the cloak made.

The affair progressed more briskly than he had expected. Far beyond all his hopes, the director awarded neither forty nor forty-five rubles for Akakiy Akakievitch's share, but sixty. Whether he suspected that Akakiy Akakievitch needed a cloak, or whether it was merely chance; at all events, twenty extra rubles were by this means provided. This circumstance hastened matters. Two or three months more of hunger and Akakiy Akakievitch had accumulated about eighty

rubles. His heart, generally so quiet, began to throb. On the first possible day he went shopping in company with Petrovitch. They bought some very good cloth, and at a reasonable rate too, for they had been considering the matter for six months, and rarely let a month pass without their visiting the shops to inquire prices. Petrovitch himself said that no better cloth could be had. For lining, they selected a cotton stuff, but so firm and thick that Petrovitch declared it to be better than silk, and even prettier and more glossy. They did not buy the marten fur because it was, in fact, dear, but in its stead they picked out the very best of cat-skin which could be found in the shop, and which might, indeed, be taken for marten at a distance.

Petrovitch worked at the cloak two whole weeks, for there was a great deal of quilting; otherwise it would have been finished sooner. He charged twelve rubles for the job; it could not possibly have been done for less. It was all sewed with silk, in small, double seams; and Petrovitch went over each seam afterward with his own teeth.

It was—it is difficult to say precisely on what day, but probably the most glorious one in Akakiy Akakievitch's life, when Petrovitch at length brought home the cloak. He brought it in the morning, before the hour when it was necessary to start for the department. Never did a cloak arrive so exactly in the nick of time, for the severe cold had set in, and it seemed to threaten to increase. Petrovitch brought the cloak himself as befits a good tailor. On his countenance was a significant expression, such as Akakiy Akakie-

vitch had never beheld there. He seemed fully sensible that he had done no small deed, and crossed a gulf separating tailors who only put in linings and execute repairs from those who make new things. He took the cloak out of the pocket-handkerchief in which he had brought it. The handkerchief was fresh from the laundress, and he put it in his pocket for use. Taking out the cloak, he gazed proudly at it, held it up with both hands, and flung it skilfully over the shoulders of Akakiy Akakievitch. Then he pulled it and fitted it down behind with his hand, and he draped it around Akakiy Akakievitch without buttoning it. Akakiy Akakievitch, like an experienced man, wished to try the sleeves. Petrovitch helped him on with them, and it turned out that the sleeves were satisfactory also. In short, the cloak appeared to be perfect and most seasonable. Petrovitch did not neglect to observe that it was only because he lived in a narrow street, and had no signboard, and had known Akakiy Akakievitch so long, that he had made it so cheaply; but that if he had been in business on the Nevsky Prospect he would have charged seventy-five rubles for the making alone. Akakiy Akakievitch did not care to argue this point with Petrovitch. He paid him, thanked him, and set out at once in his new cloak for the department. Petrovitch followed him, and, pausing in the street, gazed long at the cloak in the distance, after which he went to one side expressly to run through a crooked alley and emerge again into the street beyond to gaze once more upon the cloak from another point, namely, directly in front.

Meantime Akakiy Akakievitch went on in holiday mood. He was conscious, every second of the time, that he had a new cloak on his shoulders; and several times he laughed with internal satisfaction. In fact, there were two advantages, one was its warmth, the other its beauty. He saw nothing of the road, but suddenly found himself at the department. He took off his cloak in the anteroom, looked it over carefully, and confided it to the especial care of the attendant. It is impossible to say precisely how it was that every one in the department knew at once that Akakiy Akakievitch had a new cloak, and that the "cape" no longer existed. All rushed at the same moment into the anteroom, to inspect it. They congratulated him and said pleasant things to him, so that he began at first to smile and then to grow ashamed. When all surrounded him and said that the new cloak must be "christened," and that he must give a whole evening at least to this, Akakiy Akakievitch lost his head completely, and did not know where he stood, what to answer, or how to get out of it. He stood blushing all over for several minutes, and was on the point of assuring them with great simplicity that it was not a new cloak, that it was so and so, that it was in fact the old "cape."

At length one of the officials, a subchief probably, in order to show that he was not at all proud, and on good terms with his inferiors, said: "So be it, only I will give the party instead of Akakiy Akakievitch; I invite you all to tea with me to-night; it happens quite *à propos,* as it is my name-day." The officials naturally at once offered the subchief their congrat-

ulations, and accepted the invitation with pleasure. Akakiy Akakievitch would have declined, but all declared that it was discourteous, that it was simply a sin and a shame, and that he could not possibly refuse. Besides, the notion became pleasant to him when he recollected that he should thereby have a chance of wearing his new cloak in the evening also.

That whole day was truly a most triumphant festival day for Akakiy Akakievitch. He returned home in the most happy frame of mind, took off his cloak, and hung it carefully on the wall, admiring afresh the cloth and the lining. Then he brought out his old, worn-out cloak for comparison. He looked at it and laughed, so vast was the difference. And long after dinner he laughed again when the condition of the "cape" recurred to his mind. He dined cheerfully, and after dinner wrote nothing, but took his ease for a while on the bed, until it got dark. Then he dressed himself leisurely, put on his cloak, and stepped out into the street. Where the host lived, unfortunately, we can not say; our memory begins to fail us badly; and the houses and streets in St. Petersburg have become so mixed up in our head that it is very difficult to get anything out of it again in proper form. This much is certain, that the official lived in the best part of the city; and, therefore, it must have been anything but near to Akakiy Akakievitch's residence. Akakiy Akakievitch was first obliged to traverse a kind of wilderness of deserted, dimly lighted streets; but in proportion as he approached the official's quarter of the city the streets became more lively, more populous,

and more brilliantly illuminated. Pedestrians began to appear; handsomely dressed ladies were more frequently encountered; the men had otter-skin collars to their coats; peasant wagoners, with their gratelike sledges stuck over with brass-headed nails, became rarer; while, on the other hand, more and more drivers in red velvet caps, lacquered sledges, and bear-skin coats began to appear, and carriages with rich hammercloths flew swiftly through the streets, their wheels crunching the snow. Akakiy Akakievitch gazed upon all this as upon a novel sight. He had not been in the streets during the evening for years. He halted out of curiosity before a shop-window, to look at a picture representing a handsome woman, who had thrown off her shoe, thereby baring her whole foot in a very pretty way; while behind her the head of a man with whiskers and a handsome mustache peeped through the doorway of another room. Akakiy Akakievitch shook his head and laughed, and then went on his way. Why did he laugh? Either because he had met with a thing utterly unknown, but for which every one cherishes, nevertheless, some sort of feeling; or else he thought, like many officials, as follows: "Well, those French! What is to be said? If they do go in anything of that sort, why—" But possibly he did not think at all.

Akakiy Akakievitch at length reached the house in which the subchief lodged. The subchief lived in fine style; the staircase was lit by a lamp, his apartment being on the second floor. On entering the vestibule, Akakiy Akakievitch beheld a whole row of goloshes

on the floor. Among them, in the centre of the room, stood a samovar, or tea-urn, humming and emitting clouds of steam. On the walls hung all sorts of coats and cloaks, among which there were even some with beaver collars or velvet facings. Beyond, the buzz of conversation was audible, and became clear and loud when the servant came out with a trayful of empty glasses, cream-jugs, and sugar-bowls. It was evident that the officials had arrived long before, and had already finished their first glass of tea.

Akakiy Akakievitch, having hung up his own cloak, entered the inner room. Before him all at once appeared lights, officials, pipes, and card-tables; and he was bewildered by a sound of rapid conversation rising from all the tables, and the noise of moving chairs. He halted very awkwardly in the middle of the room, wondering what he ought to do. But they had seen him. They received him with a shout, and all thronged at once into the anteroom, and there took another look at his cloak. Akakiy Akakievitch, although somewhat confused, was frank-hearted, and could not refrain from rejoicing when he saw how they praised his cloak. Then, of course, they all dropped him and his cloak, and returned, as was proper, to the tables set out for whist.

All this, the noise, the talk, and the throng of people was rather overwhelming to Akakiy Akakievitch. He simply did not know where he stood, or where to put his hands, his feet, and his whole body. Finally he sat down by the players, looked at the cards, gazed at the face of one and another, and after a while began

to gape, and to feel that it was wearisome, the more so as the hour was already long past when he usually went to bed. He wanted to take leave of the host; but they would not let him go, saying that he must not fail to drink a glass of champagne, in honor of his new garment. In the course of an hour, supper, consisting of vegetables, salad, cold veal, pastry, confectioner's pies, and champagne, was served. They made Akakiy Akakievitch drink two glasses of champagne, after which he felt things grow livelier.

Still, he could not forget that it was twelve o'clock, and that he should have been at home long ago. In order that the host might not think of some excuse for detaining him, he stole out of the room quickly, sought out, in the anteroom, his cloak, which, to his sorrow, he found lying on the floor, brushed it, picked off every speck upon it, put it on his shoulders, and descended the stairs to the street.

In the street all was still bright. Some petty shops, those permanent clubs of servants and all sorts of folks, were open. Others were shut, but, nevertheless, showed a streak of light the whole length of the door-crack, indicating that they were not yet free of company, and that probably some domestics, male and female, were finishing their stories and conversations, while leaving their masters in complete ignorance as to their whereabouts. Akakiy Akakievitch went on in a happy frame of mind: he even started to run, without knowing why, after some lady, who flew past like a flash of lightning. But he stopped short, and went on very quietly as before, wondering why he had quickened his pace. Soon

there spread before him those deserted streets, which are not cheerful in the daytime, to say nothing of the evening. Now they were even more dim and lonely: the lanterns began to grow rarer, oil, evidently, had been less liberally supplied. Then came wooden houses and fences: not a soul anywhere; only the snow sparkled in the streets and mournfully veiled the low-roofed cabins with their closed shutters. He approached the spot where the street crossed a vast square with houses barely visible on its farther side, a square which seemed a fearful desert.

Afar, a tiny spark glimmered from some watchman's box, which seemed to stand on the edge of the world. Akakiy Akakievitch's cheerfulness diminished at this point in a marked degree. He entered the square, not without an involuntary sensation of fear, as though his heart warned him of some evil. He glanced back and on both sides, it was like a sea about him. "No, it is better not to look," he thought, and went on, closing his eyes. When he opened them, to see whether he was near the end of the square, he suddenly beheld, standing just before his very nose, some bearded individuals of precisely what sort he could not make out. All grew dark before his eyes, and his heart throbbed.

"But, of course, the cloak is mine!" said one of them in a loud voice, seizing hold of his collar. Akakiy Akakievitch was about to shout "watch" when the second man thrust a fist about the size of a man's head into his mouth, muttering, "Now scream!"

Akakiy Akakievitch felt them strip off his cloak and

give him a push with a knee; he fell headlong upon the snow, and felt no more. In a few minutes he recovered consciousness, and rose to his feet; but no one was there. He felt that it was cold in the square and that his cloak was gone; he began to shout, but his voice did not appear to reach to the outskirts of the square. In despair, but without ceasing to shout, he started at a run across the square, straight toward the watch-box, beside which stood the watchman, leaning on his halberd, and apparently curious to know what kind of a customer was running toward him and shouting. Akakiy Akakievitch ran up to him, and began in a sobbing voice to shout that he was asleep and attended to nothing, and did not see when a man was robbed. The watchman replied that he had seen two men stop him in the middle of the square, but supposed that they were friends of his; and that, instead of scolding vainly, he had better go to the police on the morrow, so that they might make a search for whoever had stolen the cloak.

Akakiy Akakievitch ran home in complete disorder; his hair, which grew very thinly upon his temples and the back of his head, wholly disordered; his body, arms, and legs covered with snow. The old woman, who was mistress of his lodgings, on hearing a terrible knocking, sprang hastily from her bed, and, with only one shoe on, ran to open the door, pressing the sleeve of her chemise to her bosom out of modesty; but when she had opened it she fell back on beholding Akakiy Akakievitch in such a state. When he told her about the affair she clasped her hands, and said

that he must go straight to the district chief of police, for his subordinate would turn up his nose, promise well, and drop the matter there. The very best thing to do, therefore, would be to go to the district chief, whom she knew, because Finnish Anna, her former cook, was now nurse at his house. She often saw him passing the house; and he was at church every Sunday, praying, but at the same time gazing cheerfully at everybody; so that he must be a good man, judging from all appearances. Having listened to this opinion, Akakiy Akakievitch betook himself sadly to his room; and how he spent the night there any one who can put himself in another's place may readily imagine.

Early in the morning he presented himself at the district chief's; but was told that this official was asleep. He went again at ten and was again informed that he was asleep; at eleven, and they said, "The superintendent is not at home;" at dinner time, and the clerks in the anteroom would not admit him on any terms, and insisted upon knowing his business. So that at last, for once in his life, Akakiy Akakievitch felt an inclination to show some spirit, and said curtly that he must see the chief in person; that they ought not to presume to refuse him entrance; that he came from the department of justice, and that when he complained of them, they would see.

The clerks dared make no reply to this, and one of them went to call the chief, who listened to the strange story of the theft of the coat. Instead of directing his attention to the principal points of the matter, he began to question Akakiy Akakievitch: Why was he going

home so late? Was he in the habit of doing so, or had he been to some disorderly house? So that Akakiy Akakievitch got thoroughly confused, and left him without knowing whether the affair of his cloak was in proper train or not.

All that day, for the first time in his life, he never went near the department. The next day he made his appearance, very pale, and in his old cape, which had become even more shabby. The news of the robbery of the cloak touched many; although there were some officials present who never lost an opportunity, even such a one as the present, of ridiculing Akakiy Akakievitch. They decided to make a collection for him on the spot, but the officials had already spent a great deal in subscribing for the director's portrait, and for some book, at the suggestion of the head of that division, who was a friend of the author; and so the sum was trifling.

One of them, moved by pity, resolved to help Akakiy Akakievitch with some good advice at least, and told him that he ought not to go to the police, for although it might happen that a police officer, wishing to win the approval of his superiors, might hunt up the cloak by some means, still his cloak would remain in the possession of the police if he did not offer legal proof that it belonged to him. The best thing for him, therefore, would be to apply to a certain prominent personage; since this prominent personage, by entering into relations with the proper persons, could greatly expedite the matter.

As there was nothing else to be done, Akakiy Aka-

kievitch decided to go to the prominent personage. What was the exact official position of the prominent personage remains unknown to this day. The reader must know that the prominent personage had but recently become a prominent personage, having up to that time been only an insignificant person. Moreover, his present position was not considered prominent in comparison with others still more so. But there is always a circle of people to whom what is insignificant in the eyes of others is important enough. Moreover, he strove to increase his importance by sundry devices; for instance, he managed to have the inferior officials meet him on the staircase when he entered upon his service; no one was to presume to come directly to him, but the strictest etiquette must be observed; the collegiate recorder must make a report to the government secretary, the government secretary to the titular councilor, or whatever other man was proper, and all business must come before him in this manner. In Holy Russia all is thus contaminated with the love of imitation; every man imitates and copies his superior. They even say that a certain titular councilor, when promoted to the head of some small separate room, immediately partitioned off a private room for himself, called it the audience chamber, and posted at the door a lackey with red collar and braid, who grasped the handle of the door and opened to all comers; though the audience chamber would hardly hold an ordinary writing table.

The manners and customs of the prominent personage were grand and imposing, but rather exaggerated.

The main foundation of his system was strictness. "Strictness, strictness, and always strictness!" he generally said; and at the last word he looked significantly into the face of the person to whom he spoke. But there was no necessity for this, for the half-score of subordinates, who formed the entire force of the office, were properly afraid; on catching sight of him afar off, they left their work, and waited, drawn up in line, until he had passed through the room. His ordinary converse with his inferiors smacked of sternness, and consisted chiefly of three phrases: "How dare you?" "Do you know whom you are speaking to?" "Do you realize who stands before you?"

Otherwise he was a very kind-hearted man, good to his comrades, and ready to oblige; but the rank of general threw him completely off his balance. On receiving any one of that rank he became confused, lost his way, as it were, and never knew what to do. If he chanced to be among his equals, he was still a very nice kind of man, a very good fellow in many respects, and not stupid; but the very moment that he found himself in the society of people but one rank lower than himself, he became silent; and his situation aroused sympathy, the more so as he felt himself that he might have been making an incomparably better use of his time. In his eyes there was sometimes visible a desire to join some interesting conversation or group; but he was kept back by the thought, "Would it not be a very great condescension on his part? Would it not be familiar? and would he not thereby lose his importance?" And in consequence of such

reflections he always remained in the same dumb state, uttering from time to time a few monosyllabic sounds, and thereby earning the name of the most wearisome of men.

To this prominent personage, Akakiy Akakievitch presented himself, and this at the most unfavorable time for himself, though opportune for the prominent personage. The prominent personage was in his cabinet, conversing very gaily with an old acquaintance and companion of his childhood, whom he had not seen for several years, and who had just arrived, when it was announced to him that a person named Bashmatchkin had come. He asked abruptly: "Who is he?" "Some official," he was informed. "Ah, he can wait! this is no time for him to call," said the important man.

It must be remarked here that the important man lied outrageously: he had said all he had to say to his friend long before; and the conversation had been interspersed for some time with very long pauses, during which they merely slapped each other on the leg, and said: "You think so, Ivan Abramovitch?" "Just so, Stephan Varlamovitch!" Nevertheless, he ordered that the official should be kept waiting, in order to show his friend, a man who had not been in the service for a long time, but had lived at home in the country, how long officials had to wait in his anteroom.

At length, having talked himself completely out, and more than that, having had his fill of pauses, and smoked a cigar in a very comfortable armchair with reclining back, he suddenly seemed to recollect, and

said to the secretary, who stood by the door with papers of reports, "So it seems that there is a tchinovnik waiting to see me. Tell him that he may come in." On perceiving Akakiy Akakievitch's modest mien and his worn undress uniform, he turned abruptly to him and said: "What do you want?" in a curt, hard voice, which he had practised in his room in private, and before the looking-glass, for a whole week before being raised to his present rank.

Akakiy Akakievitch, who was already imbued with a due amount of fear, became somewhat confused; and, as well as his tongue would permit, explained, with a rather more frequent addition than usual of the word "that," that his cloak was quite new and had been stolen in the most inhuman manner; that he had applied to him in order that he might, in some way, by his intermediation—that he might enter into correspondence with the chief of police, and find the cloak.

For some inexplicable reason this conduct seemed familiar to the prominent personage. "What, my dear sir!" he said abruptly, "are you not acquainted with etiquette? Where have you come from? Don't you know how such matters are managed? You should first have entered a complaint about this at the court below: it would have gone to the head of the department, then to the chief of the division, then it would have been handed over to the secretary, and the secretary would have given it to me."

"But, your excellency," said Akakiy Akakievitch, trying to collect his small handful of wits, and conscious at the same time that he was perspiring terribly,

"I, your excellency, presumed to trouble you because secretaries—are an untrustworthy race."

"What, what, what!" said the important personage. "Where did you get such courage? Where did you get such ideas? What impudence toward their chiefs and superiors has spread among the young generation!" The prominent personage apparently had not observed that Akakiy Akakievitch was already in the neighborhood of fifty. If he could be called a young man, it must have been in comparison with some one who was seventy. "Do you know to whom you speak? Do you realize who stands before you? Do you realize it? do you realize it? I ask you!" Then he stamped his foot and raised his voice to such a pitch that it would have frightened even a different man from Akakiy Akakievitch.

Akakiy Akakievitch's senses failed him; he staggered, trembled in every limb, and, if the porters had not run in to support him, would have fallen to the floor. They carried him out insensible. But the prominent personage, gratified that the effect should have surpassed his expectations, and quite intoxicated with the thought that his word could even deprive a man of his senses, glanced sidewise at his friend in order to see how he looked upon this, and perceived, not without satisfaction, that his friend was in a most uneasy frame of mind, and even beginning, on his part, to feel a trifle frightened.

Akakiy Akakievitch could not remember how he descended the stairs, and got into the street. He felt neither his hands nor feet. Never in his life had he

been so rated by any high official, let alone a strange one. He went staggering on through the snowstorm, which was blowing in the streets, with his mouth wide open, the wind, in St. Petersburg fashion, darted upon him from all quarters, and down every cross street. In a twinkling it had blown a quinsy into his throat, and he reached home unable to utter a word. His throat was swollen, and he lay down on his bed. So powerful is sometimes a good scolding!

The next day a violent fever showed itself. Thanks to the generous assistance of the St. Petersburg climate, the malady progressed more rapidly than could have been expected; and when the doctor arrived, he found, on feeling the sick man's pulse, that there was nothing to be done, except to prescribe a fomentation, so that the patient might not be left entirely without the beneficent aid of medicine; but at the same time he predicted his end in thirty-six hours. After this he turned to the landlady, and said: "And as for you, don't waste your time on him: order his pine coffin now, for an oak one will be too expensive for him." Did Akakiy Akakievitch hear these fatal words? and if he heard them, did they produce any overwhelming effect upon him? Did he lament the bitterness of his life? We know not, for he continued in a delirious condition. Visions incessantly appeared to him each stranger than the other. Now he saw Petrovitch and ordered him to make a cloak with some traps for robbers who seemed to him to be always under the bed; and cried every moment to the landlady to pull one of them from under his coverlet. Then he inquired why

his old mantle hung before him when he had a new cloak. Next he fancied that he was standing before the prominent person listening to a thorough setting-down and saying: "Forgive me, your excellency!" but at last he began to curse, uttering the most horrible words, so that his aged landlady crossed herself, never in her life having heard anything of the kind from him, the more so, as those words followed directly after the words "your excellency." Later on he talked utter nonsense, of which nothing could be made: all that was evident being that his incoherent words and thoughts hovered ever about one thing, his cloak.

At length poor Akakiy Akakievitch breathed his last. They sealed up neither his room nor his effects, because, in the first place, there were no heirs, and, in the second, there was very little to inherit beyond a bundle of goose-quills, a quire of white official paper, three pairs of socks, two or three buttons which had burst off his trousers, and the mantle already known to the reader. To whom all this fell, God knows. I confess that the person who told me this tale took no interest in the matter. They carried Akakiy Akakievitch out, and buried him.

And St. Petersburg was left without Akakiy Akakievitch, as though he had never lived there. A being disappeared, who was protected by none, dear to none, interesting to none, and who never even attracted to himself the attention of those students of human nature, who omit no opportunity of thrusting a pin through a common fly, and examining it under the microscope. A being who bore meekly the jibes of

the department, and went to his grave without having done one unusual deed, but to whom, nevertheless, at the close of his life, appeared a bright visitant in the form of a cloak, which momentarily cheered his poor life, and upon whom, thereafter, an intolerable misfortune descended, just as it descends upon the heads of the mighty of this world!

Several days after his death, the porter was sent from the department to his lodgings with an order for him to present himself there immediately; the chief commanding it. But the porter had to return unsuccessful, with the answer that he could not come; and to the question, "Why?" replied, "Well, because he is dead! he was buried four days ago." In this manner did they hear of Akakiy Akakievitch's death at the department; and the next day a new official sat in his place, with a handwriting by no means so upright, but more inclined and slanting.

But who could have imagined that this was not really the end of Akakiy Akakievitch, that he was destined to raise a commotion after death, as if in compensation for his utterly insignificant life? But so it happened, and our poor story unexpectedly gains a fantastic ending.

A rumor suddenly spread through St. Petersburg that a dead man had taken to appearing on the Kalinkin Bridge and its vicinity, at night, in the form of a tchinovnik seeking a stolen cloak, and that, under the pretext of its being the stolen cloak, he dragged, without regard to rank or calling, every one's cloak from his shoulders, be it catskin, beaver, fox, bear, sable; in

a word, every sort of fur and skin which men adopted for their covering. One of the department officials saw the dead man with his own eyes, and immediately recognized in him Akakiy Akakievitch. This, however, inspired him with such terror that he ran off with all his might, and therefore did not scan the dead man closely, but only saw how the latter threatened him from afar with his finger. Constant complaints poured in from all quarters, of those who were exposed to the danger of a cold, on account of the frequent dragging off of their cloaks.

Arrangements were made by the police to catch the corpse, alive or dead, at any cost, and punish him as an example to others, in the most severe manner. In this they nearly succeeded; for a watchman, on guard in Kirushkin Alley, caught the corpse by the collar on the very scene of his evil deeds, when attempting to pull off the frieze cloak of a retired musician. Having seized him by the collar, he summoned, with a shout, two of his comrades, whom he enjoined to hold him fast, while he himself felt for a moment in his boot, in order to draw out his snuff-box, and refresh his frozen nose. But the snuff was of a sort which even a corpse could not endure. The watchman, having closed his right nostril with his finger, had no sooner succeeded in holding half a handful up to the left than the corpse sneezed so violently that he completely filled the eyes of all three. While they raised their hands to wipe them, the dead man vanished completely, so that they positively did not know whether they had actually had him in their grip at all. Thereafter the watchmen

conceived such a terror of dead men that they were afraid even to seize the living, and only screamed from a distance: "Hey, there! go your way!" So the dead tchinovnik began to appear, even beyond the Kalinkin Bridge, causing no little terror to all timid people.

But we have totally neglected that certain prominent personage, who may really be considered as the cause of the fantastic turn taken by this true history. First of all, justice compels us to say that after the departure of poor, annihilated Akakiy Akakievitch, he felt something like remorse. Suffering was unpleasant to him, for his heart was accessible to many good impulses, in spite of the fact that his rank often prevented his showing his true self. As soon as his friend had left his cabinet he began to think about poor Akakiy Akakievitch. And from that day forth poor Akakiy Akakievitch, who could not bear up under an official reprimand, recurred to his mind almost every day. The thought troubled him to such an extent that a week later he even resolved to send an official to him, to learn whether he really could assist him; and when it was reported to him that Akakiy Akakievitch had died suddenly of fever, he was startled, harkened to the reproaches of his conscience, and was out of sorts for the whole day.

Wishing to divert his mind in some way, and drive away the disagreeable impression, he set out that evening for one of his friends' houses, where he found quite a large party assembled. What was better, nearly every one was of the same rank as himself, so that he need not feel in the least constrained. This

had a marvelous effect upon his mental state. He grew expansive, made himself agreeable in conversation, in short, he passed a delightful evening. After supper he drank a couple of glasses of champagne—not a bad recipe for cheerfulness, as every one knows. The champagne inclined him to various adventures; and he determined not to return home, but to go and see a certain well-known lady, of German extraction, Karolina Ivanovna, a lady, it appears, with whom he was on a very friendly footing.

It must be mentioned that the prominent personage was no longer a young man, but a good husband, and respected father of a family. Two sons, one of whom was already in the service; and a good-looking, sixteen-year-old daughter, with a rather *retroussé* but pretty little nose, came every morning to kiss his hand, and say: "*Bon jour*, papa." His wife, a still fresh and good-looking woman, first gave him her hand to kiss, and then, reversing the procedure, kissed his. But the prominent personage, though perfectly satisfied in his domestic relations, considered it stylish to have a friend in another quarter of the city. This friend was scarcely prettier or younger than his wife; but there are such puzzles in the world, and it is not our place to judge them. So the important personage descended the stairs, stepped into his sledge, said to the coachman, "To Karolina Ivanovna's," and, wrapping himself luxuriously in his warm cloak, found himself in that delightful frame of mind than which a Russian can conceive nothing better, namely, when you think of nothing yourself, yet when the thoughts creep into

your mind of their own accord, each more agreeable than the other, giving you no trouble either to drive them away or seek them. Fully satisfied, he recalled all the gay features of the evening just passed, and all the *mots* which had made the little circle laugh. Many of them he repeated in a low voice, and found them quite as funny as before; so it is not surprising that he should laugh heartily at them. Occasionally, however, he was interrupted by gusts of wind, which, coming suddenly, God knows whence or why, cut his face, drove masses of snow into it, filled out his cloak-collar like a sail, or suddenly blew it over his head with supernatural force, and thus caused him constant trouble to disentangle himself.

Suddenly the important personage felt some one clutch him firmly by the collar. Turning round, he perceived a man of short stature, in an old, worn uniform, and recognized, not without terror, Akakiy Akakievitch. The official's face was white as snow, and looked just like a corpse's. But the horror of the important personage transcended all bounds when he saw the dead man's mouth open, and, with a terrible odor of the grave, give vent to the following remarks: "Ah, here you are at last! I have you, that —by the collar! I need your cloak; you took no trouble about mine, but reprimanded me; so now give up your own."

The pallid prominent personage almost died of fright. Brave as he was in the office and in the presence of inferiors generally, and although, at the sight of his manly form and appearance, every one

said, "Ugh! how much character he has!" at this crisis, he, like many possessed of a heroic exterior, experienced such terror that, not without cause, he began to fear an attack of illness. He flung his cloak hastily from his shoulders and shouted to his coachman in an unnatural voice: "Home at full speed!" The coachman, hearing the tone which is generally employed at critical moments, and even accompanied by something much more tangible, drew his head down between his shoulders in case of an emergency, flourished his whip, and flew on like an arrow. In a little more than six minutes the prominent personage was at the entrance of his own house. Pale, thoroughly scared, and cloakless, he went home instead of to Karolina Ivanovna's, reached his room somehow or other, and passed the night in the direst distress; so that the next morning over their tea his daughter said: "You are very pale to-day, papa." But papa remained silent, and said not a word to any one of what had happened to him, where he had been, or where he had intended to go.

This occurrence made a deep impression upon him. He even began to say: "How dare you? do you realize who stands before you?" less frequently to the underofficials, and, if he did utter the words, it was only after first having learned the bearings of the matter. But the most noteworthy point was that from that day forward the apparition of the dead tchinovnik ceased to be seen. Evidently the prominent personage's cloak just fitted his shoulders; at all events, no more instances of his dragging cloaks from people's shoulders

were heard of. But many active and apprehensive persons could by no means reassure themselves, and asserted that the dead tchinovnik still showed himself in distant parts of the city.

In fact, one watchman in Kolomna saw with his own eyes the apparition come from behind a house. But being rather weak of body, he dared not arrest him, but followed him in the dark, until, at length, the apparition looked round, paused, and inquired: "What do you want?" at the same time showing such a fist as is never seen on living men. The watchman said: "It's of no consequence," and turned back instantly. But the apparition was much too tall, wore huge mustaches, and, directing its steps apparently toward the Obukhoff Bridge, disappeared in the darkness of the night.

THE RENDEZVOUS
AND
THE COUNTING-HOUSE

BY IVAN TURGENEV

The greatest of Russian authors was born in 1818, and, expatriated from Russia, died in the suburbs of Paris in 1883. His literary method reversed the usual process. The plot of a story was something he never thought of. His short stories are wonderful character drawings of individuals or groups that show a complete, a brooding absorption in his subjects. The spirit of the great Slav race lives in his work, and though his stories are sombre his characters have a vitality that only genius can give. An aristocrat, and possessed of some means, Turgenev's stories concern themselves with the old racial traits of character, but do not touch on the revolutionary element.

THE RENDEZVOUS

BY IVAN TURGENEV

I WAS sitting in a birch grove in autumn, near the middle of September. It had been drizzling ever since morning; occasionally the sun shone warmly —the weather was changeable. Now the sky was overcast with watery white clouds, now it suddenly cleared up for an instant, and then the bright, soft azure, like a beautiful eye, appeared from beyond the dispersed clouds. I was sitting looking about me and listening. The leaves were slightly rustling over my head; and by their very rustle one could tell what season of the year it was. It was not the gay, laughing palpitation of spring; not a soft whispering, nor the lingering chatter of summer, nor the timid and cold lisping of late autumn, but a barely audible, drowsy prattle. A faint breeze was whisking over the tree-tops. The interior of the grove, moist from the rain, was forever changing, as the sun shone or hid beyond the clouds; now the grove was all illuminated as if everything in it had burst into a smile; the trunks of the birch trees suddenly assumed the soft reflection of white silk; the small leaves which lay scattered on the ground all at once became variegated and flashed up like red gold; and the pretty stalks of the tall, branchy ferns, already tinted in their autumn hue, re-

Translated by Herman Bernstein. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

sembling the color of overripe grapes, appeared here and there tangling and crossing one another. Now again everything suddenly turned blue; the bright colors died out instantaneously, the birch trees stood all white, lustreless, like snow which had not yet been touched by the coldly playing rays of the winter sun—and stealthily, slyly, a drizzling rain began to sprinkle and whisper over the forest. The leaves on the birches were almost all green yet, though they had turned somewhat pale; only here and there stood a solitary young little birch, all red or all golden, and one should have seen how brightly these birches flushed in the sun when its rays suddenly appeared gliding and flashing through the dense net of the thin branches which had just been washed around by the sparkling rain. Not a single bird was heard; all had found shelter, and were silent; only rarely the mocking voice of the bluebird sang out like a little steel bell. Before stopping in this birch forest I passed with my dog through a poplar grove. I confess I am not very fond of the poplar tree with its pale lilac-colored trunk and its grayish-green, metallic leaves, which it lifts high and spreads in the air like a trembling fan—I do not like the constant shaking of its round, untidy leaves, which are so awkwardly attached to long stems. The poplar is pretty only on certain summer evenings when, rising high amid the low shrubbery, it stands against the red rays of the setting sun, shining and trembling, bathed from root to top in uniform yellowish purple—or when, on a clear windy day, it rocks noisily, lisping against the blue

sky, and each leaf seems as if eager to tear itself away, to fly and hurry off into the distance. But in general I do not like this tree, and, therefore, not stopping to rest in the poplar grove, I made my way to the birch forest, and seated myself under a tree whose branches started near the ground, and thus could protect me from the rain. Having admired the surrounding view, I fell asleep—I slept that tranquil, sweet sleep which is familiar to hunters only.

I can not say how long I slept, but when I opened my eyes the entire interior of the forest was filled with sunshine, and everywhere the bright blue sky was flashing through the cheerfully droning leaves; the clouds disappeared, driven asunder by the wind which had begun to play; the weather was clear now, and one felt in the air that peculiar, dry freshness which, filling the heart with a certain vigorous sensation, almost always predicts a quiet, clear night after a rainy day. I was about to rise and try my luck at hunting again, when my eyes suddenly fell on a motionless human figure. I gazed at it fixedly; it was a young peasant girl. She was sitting some twenty feet away from me, her head bowed pensively and her hands dropped on her knees; in one hand, which was half open, lay a heavy bunch of field flowers, and every time she breathed the flowers were softly gliding over her checkered skirt. A clear white shirt, buttoned at the neck and the wrists, fell in short, soft folds about her waist; large yellow beads were hanging down from her neck on her bosom in two rows. She was not at all bad-looking. Her heavy fair hair, of a

beautiful ash color, parted in two neatly combed half-circles from under a narrow, dark-red head-band, which was pulled down almost to her ivory-white forehead; the rest of her face was slightly tanned with the golden sunburn peculiar to a tender skin. I could not see her eyes—she did not lift them; but I saw her thin, high eyebrows, her long lashes; these were moist, and on her cheek gleamed a dried-up tear-drop, which had stopped near her somewhat pale lips. Her entire small head was very charming; even her somewhat thick and round nose did not spoil it. I liked especially the expression of her face; it was so simple and gentle, so sad and so full of childish perplexity before her own sadness. She was apparently waiting for some one. Something cracked faintly in the forest. Immediately she raised her head and looked around; her eyes flashed quickly before me in the transparent shade—they were large, bright, and shy like a deer's. She listened for a few seconds, not moving her wide-open eyes from the spot whence the faint sound had come; she heaved a sigh, turned her head slowly, bent down still lower and began to examine the flowers. Her eyelids turned red, her lips quivered bitterly and a new teardrop rolled down from under her heavy eyelashes, stopping and sparkling on her cheek. Thus quite a long while passed; the poor girl did not stir—only occasionally she moved her hands and listened—listened all the time. Something cracked once more in the forest—she started. This time the noise did not stop, it was becoming more distinct, it was nearing—at last firm footsteps

were heard. She straightened herself, and it seemed as if she lost her courage, for her eyes began to quiver. The figure of a man appeared through the jungle. She looked fixedly, suddenly flushed, and, smiling joyously and happily, seemed about to rise, but she immediately cast down her head again, turned pale, confused—only then she lifted her quivering, almost prayerful, eyes to the man as he paused beside her.

I looked at him from my hiding-place with curiosity. I confess he did not produce a pleasant impression upon me. He was, by all appearances, a spoiled valet of some rich young man. His clothes betokened a claim to taste and smart carelessness. He wore a short top-coat of bronze color, which evidently belonged to his master, and which was buttoned up to the very top; he had on a pink necktie with lilac-colored edges; and his black velvet cap, trimmed with gold stripes, was pulled over his very eyebrows. The round collar of his white shirt propped his ears up and cut his cheeks mercilessly, and the starched cuffs covered his hands up to his red, crooked fingers, which were ornamented with silver and gold rings, set with forget-me-nots of turquoise. His red, fresh, impudent face belonged to those countenances which, as far as I have observed, are almost always repulsive to men, but, unfortunately, are often admired by women. Apparently trying to give an expression of contempt and of weariness to his rough features, he was forever closing his small, milky-gray eyes, knitting his brows, lowering the corners of his lips, yawning forcedly, and, with careless, although not too clever,

ease, now adjusting his reddish, smartly twisted temple-curls, now fingering the yellow hair which bristled upon his thick upper lip—in a word, he was making an insufferable display of himself. He started to do this as soon as he noticed the young peasant girl who was awaiting him. He advanced to her slowly, with large strides, then stood for a while, twitched his shoulders, thrust both hands into the pockets of his coat, and, casting a quick and indifferent glance at the poor girl, sank down on the ground.

"Well?" he began, continuing to look aside, shaking his foot and yawning. "Have you waited long?"

The girl could not answer him at once.

"Long, Victor Alexandrich," she said at last, in a scarcely audible voice.

"Ah!" He removed his cap, majestically passed his hand over his thick, curly hair whose roots started almost at his eyebrows, and, looking around with dignity, covered his precious head again cautiously. "And I almost forgot all about it. Besides, you see, it's raining." He yawned again. "I have a lot of work to do; you can't look after everything, and he is yet scolding. We are leaving to-morrow—"

"To-morrow?" uttered the girl, and fixed a frightened look upon him.

"To-morrow— Come, come, come, please," he replied quickly, vexed, noticing that she quivered, and bowed her head in silence. "Please, Akulina, don't cry. You know I can't bear it" (and he twitched

his flat nose). "If you don't stop, I'll leave you right away. What nonsense—to whimper!"

"Well, I shan't, I shan't," said Akulina hastily, swallowing the tears with an effort. "So you're going away to-morrow?" she added, after a brief silence. "When will it please God to have me meet you again, Victor Alexandrich?"

"We'll meet, we'll meet again. If it isn't next year, it'll be later. My master, it seems, wants to enter the service in St. Petersburg," he went on, pronouncing the words carelessly and somewhat indistinctly. "And it may be that we'll go abroad."

"You will forget me, Victor Alexandrich," said Akulina sadly.

"No—why should I? I'll not forget you, only you had rather be sensible; don't make a fool of yourself; obey your father— And I'll not forget you— Oh, no; oh, no." And he stretched himself calmly and yawned again.

"Do not forget me, Victor Alexandrich," she resumed in a beseeching voice. "I have loved you so much, it seems—all, it seems, for you— You tell me to obey father, Victor Alexandrich— How am I to obey my father—?"

"How's that?" He pronounced these words as if from the stomach, lying on his back and holding his hands under his head.

"Why, Victor Alexandrich—you know it yourself—"

She fell silent. Victor fingered his steel watch-chain.

"Akulina, you are not a foolish girl," he said at last, "therefore don't talk nonsense. It's for your own good, do you understand me? Of course, you are not foolish, you're not altogether a peasant, so to say, and your mother wasn't always a peasant either. Still, you are without education—therefore you must obey when you are told to."

"But it's terrible, Victor Alexandrich."

"Oh, what nonsense, my dear—what is she afraid of! What is that you have there," he added, moving closer to her, "flowers?"

"Flowers," replied Akulina sadly. "I have picked some field tansies," she went on, with some animation. "They're good for the calves. And here I have some marigolds—for scrofula. Here, look, what a pretty flower! I haven't seen such a pretty flower in all my life. Here are forget-me-nots, and—and these I have picked for you," she added, taking from under the tansies a small bunch of cornflowers, tied around with a thin blade of grass; "do you want them?"

Victor stretched out his hand lazily, took the flowers, smelt them carelessly, and began to turn them around in his fingers, looking up with thoughtful importance. Akulina gazed at him. There was so much tender devotion, reverent obedience, and love in her pensive eyes. She at once feared him, and yet she dared not cry, and inwardly she bade him farewell, and admired him for the last time; and he lay there, stretched out like a sultan, and endured her admiration with magnanimous patience and condescension. I confess I was filled with indignation as I looked

at his red face, which betrayed satisfied selfishness through his feigned contempt and indifference. Akulina was so beautiful at this moment. All her soul opened before him trustingly and passionately—it reached out to him, caressed him, and he— He dropped the cornflowers on the grass, took out from the side-pocket of his coat a round glass in a bronze frame and began to force it into his eye; but no matter how hard he tried to hold it with his knitted brow, his raised cheek, and even with his nose, the glass dropped out and fell into his hands.

"What's this?" asked Akulina at last, with surprise.

"A lorgnette," he replied importantly.

"What is it for?"

"To see better."

"Let me see it."

Victor frowned, but gave her the glass.

"Look out; don't break it."

"Don't be afraid, I'll not break it." She lifted it timidly to her eye.

"I can't see anything," she said naively.

"Shut your eye," he retorted in the tone of a dissatisfied teacher. She closed the eye before which she held the glass.

"Not that eye, not that one, you fool! The other one!" exclaimed Victor, and, not allowing her to correct her mistake, he took the lorgnette away from her.

Akulina blushed, laughed slightly, and turned away.

"It seems it's not for us."

"Of course not!"

The poor girl maintained silence, and heaved a deep sigh.

"Oh, Victor Alexandrich, how will I get along without you?" she said suddenly.

Victor wiped the lorgnette and put it back into his pocket.

"Yes, yes," he said at last. "At first it will really be hard for you." He tapped her on the shoulder condescendingly; she quietly took his hand from her shoulder and kissed it. "Well, yes, yes, you are indeed a good girl," he went on, with a self-satisfied smile; "but it can't be helped! Consider it yourself! My master and I can't stay here, can we? Winter is near, and to pass the winter in the country is simply nasty—you know it yourself. It's a different thing in St. Petersburg! There are such wonders over there that you could not imagine even in your dreams, you silly— What houses, what streets, and society, education—it's something wonderful!—" Akulina listened to him with close attention, slightly opening her lips like a child. "However," he added, wriggling on the ground, "why do I say all this to you? You can't understand it anyway!"

"Why not, Victor Alexandrich? I understood, I understood everything."

"Just think of her!"

Akulina cast down her eyes.

"You did not speak to me like this before, Victor Alexandrich," she said, without lifting her eyes.

"Before?— Before! Just think of her!— Before!" he remarked, indignantly.

Both grew silent.

"However, it's time for me to go," said Victor, and leaned on his elbow, about to rise.

"Wait a little," said Akulina in an imploring voice.

"What for? I have already said to you, Good-by!"

"Wait," repeated Akulina.

Victor again stretched himself on the ground and began to whistle. Akulina kept looking at him steadfastly. I could see that she was growing agitated by degrees—her lips twitched, her pale cheeks were reddening.

"Victor Alexandrich," she said at last in a broken voice, "it's a sin for you, it's a sin, Victor Alexandrich, by God!"

"What's a sin?" he asked, knitting his brows. He raised his head and turned to her.

"It's a sin, Victor Alexandrich. If you would only say a good word to me before leaving—if you would only say one word to me, miserable little orphan that I am—"

"But what shall I say to you?"

"I don't know. You know that better than I do, Victor Alexandrich. Here you are going away—if you would only say one word— What have I done to deserve this?"

"How strange you are! What can I say?"

"If only one word—"

"There she's firing away one and the same thing," he muttered with vexation, and got up.

"Don't be angry, Victor Alexandrich," she added hastily, unable to repress her tears.

"I'm not angry—only you are foolish— What do you want? I can't marry you! I can't, can I? Well, then, what do you want? What?" He stared at her, as if awaiting an answer, and opened his fingers wide.

"I want nothing—nothing," she replied, stammering, not daring to outstretch her trembling hands to him, "but simply so, at least one word, at parting—"

And the tears began to stream from her eyes.

"Well, there you are, she's started crying," said Victor indifferently, pulling the cap over his eyes.

"I don't want anything," she went on, sobbing and covering her face with her hands; "but how will I feel now at home, how will I feel? And what will become of me, what will become of me, wretched one that I am? They'll marry the poor little orphan off to a man she does not like. My poor little head!"

"Keep on singing, keep on singing," muttered Victor in a low voice, stirring restlessly.

"If you only said one word, just one: 'Akulina —I—'"

Sudden heartrending sobs interrupted her. She fell with her face upon the grass and cried bitterly, bitterly— All her body shook convulsively, the back of her neck seemed to rise— The long-suppressed sorrow at last burst forth in a stream of tears. Victor stood a while near her, then he shrugged his shoulders, turned around and walked off with large steps.

A few moments went by. She grew silent, lifted her head, looked around and clasped her hands; she was about to run after him, but her feet failed her—she fell down on her knees. I could not endure it any longer and rushed over to her; but before she had time to look at me, she suddenly seemed to have regained her strength—and with a faint cry she rose and disappeared behind the trees, leaving the scattered flowers on the ground.

I stood a while, picked up the bunch of cornflowers, and walked out of the grove to the field. The sun was low in the pale, clear sky; its rays seemed to have faded and turned cold; they did not shine now, they spread in an even, almost watery, light. There was only a half-hour left until evening, and twilight was setting in. A violent wind was blowing fast toward me across the yellow, dried-up stubble-field; the small withered leaves were carried quickly past me across the road; the side of the grove which stood like a wall by the field trembled and flashed clearly, but not brightly; everywhere on the reddish grass, on the blades, and the straw, innumerable autumn cobwebs flashed and trembled. I stopped. I began to feel sad; it seemed a dismal fear of approaching winter was stealing through the gay, though fresh, smile of fading nature. High above me, a cautious raven flew by, heavily and sharply cutting the air with his wings; then he turned his head, looked at me sidewise, and, croaking abruptly, disappeared beyond the forest; a large flock of pigeons rushed past me from a barn, and, suddenly whirling about in a column, they came

down and stationed themselves bustlingly upon the field—a sign of spring autumn! Somebody rode by beyond the bare hillock, making much noise with an empty wagon.

I returned home, but the image of poor Akulina did not leave my mind for a long time, and the corn-flowers, long withered, are in my possession to this day.

THE COUNTING-HOUSE

BY IVAN TURGENEV

IT was autumn. For some hours I had been strolling across country with my gun, and should probably not have returned till evening to the tavern on the Kursk high-road, where my three-horse trap was awaiting me, had not an exceedingly fine and persistent rain, which had worried me all day with the obstinacy and ruthlessness of some old maiden lady, driven me at last to seek at least a temporary shelter somewhere in the neighborhood. While I was still deliberating in which direction to go, my eye suddenly fell on a low shanty near a field sown with peas. I went up to the shanty, glanced under the thatched roof, and saw an old man so infirm that he reminded me at once of the dying goat Robinson Crusoe found in some cave on his island. The old man was squatting on his heels, his little dim eyes half closed, while hurriedly, but carefully, like a hare (the poor fellow had not a single tooth), he munched a dry, hard pea, incessantly rolling it from side to side. He was so absorbed in this occupation that he did not notice my entrance.

"Grandfather! hey, grandfather!" said I. He ceased munching, lifted his eyebrows high, and with an effort opened his eyes.

"What?" he mumbled in a broken voice.

Translated by Constance Garnett.

"Where is there a village near?" I asked.

The old man fell to munching again. He had not heard me. I repeated my question louder than before.

"A village?— But what do you want?"

"Why, shelter from the rain?"

"What?"

"Shelter from the rain."

"Ah!" He scratched his sunburnt neck. "Well, now, you go," he said suddenly, waving his hands indefinitely, "so—as you go by the copse—see, as you go—there'll be a road; you pass it by, and keep right on to the right; keep right on, keep right on, keep right on— Well, there will be Ananyevo. Or else you'd go to Sitovka."

I followed the old man with difficulty. His mustaches muffled his voice, and his tongue too did not obey him readily.

"Where are you from?" I asked him.

"What?"

"Where are you from?"

"Ananyevo."

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm watchman."

"Why, what are you watching?"

"The peas."

I could not help smiling.

"Really!—how old are you?"

"God knows."

"Your sight's failing, I expect."

"What?"

"Your sight's failing, I daresay?"

"Yes, it's failing. At times I can hear nothing."

"Then how can you be a watchman, eh?"

"Oh, my elders know about that."

"Elders!" I thought, and I gazed not without compassion at the poor old man. He fumbled about, pulled out of his bosom a bit of coarse bread, and began sucking it like a child, with difficulty moving his sunken cheeks.

I walked in the direction of the copse, turned to the right, kept on, kept right on as the old man had advised me, and at last got to a large village with a stone church in the new style, *i. e.,* with columns, and a spacious manor-house, also with columns. While still some way off I noticed through the fine network of falling rain a cottage with a deal roof, and two chimneys, higher than the others, in all probability the dwelling of the village elder; and toward it I bent my steps in the hope of finding, in this cottage, a samovar, tea, sugar, and some not absolutely sour cream. Escorted by my half-frozen dog, I went up the steps into the outer room, opened the door, and instead of the usual appurtenances of a cottage, I saw several tables, heaped up with papers, two red cupboards, bespattered inkstands, pewter boxes of blotting sand weighing half a hundred-weight, long penholders, and so on. At one of the tables was sitting a young man of twenty with a swollen, sickly face, diminutive eyes, a greasy-looking forehead, and long, straggling locks of hair. He was dressed, as one would expect, in a gray nankeen coat, shiny with wear at the waist and the collar.

"What do you want?" he asked me, flinging his head up like a horse taken unexpectedly by the nose.

"Does the bailiff live here—or—"

"This is the principal office of the manor," he interrupted. "I'm the clerk on duty— Didn't you see the sign-board? That's what it was put up for."

"Where could I dry my clothes here? Is there a samovar anywhere in the village?"

"Samovars, of course," replied the young man in the gray coat with dignity; "go to Father Timofey's, or to the servants' cottage, or else to Nazar Tarasitch, or to Agrafena, the poultry woman."

"Who are you taking to, you blockhead? Can't you let me sleep, dummy!" shouted a voice from the next room.

"Here's a gentleman's come in to ask where he can dry himself."

"What sort of a gentleman?"

"I don't know. With a dog and a gun."

A bedstead creaked in the next room. The door opened, and there came in a stout, short man of fifty, with a bull neck, goggle eyes, extraordinarily round cheeks, and his whole face positively shining with sleekness.

"What is it you wish?" he asked me.

"To dry my things."

"There's no place here."

"I didn't know this was the counting-house; I am willing, though, to pay—"

"Well, perhaps it could be managed here," rejoined the fat man; "won't you come inside here?" He led

me into another room, but not the one he had come from. "Would this do for you?"

"Very well— And could I have tea and milk?"

"Certainly, at once. If you'll meantime take off your things and rest, the tea shall be got ready this minute."

"Whose property is this?"

"Madame Losnyakov's, Elena Nikolaevna."

He went out. I looked round: against the partition separating my room from the office stood a huge leather sofa; two high-backed chairs, also covered in leather, were placed on both sides of the solitary window which looked out on the village street. On the walls, covered with a green paper with pink patterns on it, hung three immense oil paintings. One depicted a setter dog with a blue collar, bearing the inscription: "This is my consolation"; at the dog's feet flowed a river; on the opposite bank of the river a hare of quite disproportionate size, with ears cocked up, was sitting under a pine tree. In another picture two old men were eating a melon; behind the melon was visible in the distance a Greek temple with the inscription: "The Temple of Satisfaction." The third picture represented the half-nude figure of a woman in a recumbent position, much foreshortened, with red knees and very big heels. My dog had, with superhuman efforts, crouched under the sofa, and apparently found a great deal of dust there, as he kept sneezing violently. I went to the window. Boards had been laid across the street in a slanting direction from the manor-house to the counting-house—a very useful precaution, as,

thanks to our rich black soil and the persistent rain, the mud was terrible. In the grounds of the manor-house, which stood with its back to the street, there was the constant going and coming there always is about manor-houses: maids in faded chintz gowns flitted to and fro; house-serfs sauntered through the mud, stood still, and scratched their spines meditatively; the constable's horse, tied up to a post, lashed his tail lazily, and, with his nose high up, gnawed at the hedge; hens were clucking; sickly turkeys kept up an incessant gobble-gobble. On the steps of a dark, crumbling out-house, probably the bath-house, sat a stalwart lad with a guitar, singing with some spirit the well-known ballad:

"I'm leaving this enchanting spot
To go into the desert."

The fat man came into the room.

"They're bringing you in your tea," he told me, with an affable smile.

The young man in the gray coat, the clerk on duty, laid on the old card-table a samovar, a teapot, a tumbler on a broken saucer, a jug of cream, and a bunch of Bolhovo biscuit rings. The fat man went out.

"What is he?" I asked the clerk; "the steward?"

"No, sir; he was the chief cashier, but now he has been promoted to be head clerk."

"Haven't you got a steward, then?"

"No, sir. There's an agent, Mihal Vikulov, but no steward."

"Is there a manager, then?"

"Yes; a German, Lindamandol, Karlo Karlitch; only he does not manage the estate."

"Who does manage it, then?"

"Our mistress herself."

"You don't say so. And are there many of you in the office?"

The young man reflected.

"There are six of us."

"Who are they?" I inquired.

"Well, first there's Vassily Nikolaevitch, the head cashier; then Piotr, one clerk; Piotr's brother, Ivan, another clerk; the other Ivan, a clerk; Konstantin Narkizer, another clerk; and me here—there's a lot of us, you can't count all of them."

"I suppose your mistress has a great many serfs in her house?"

"No, not to say a great many."

"How many, then?"

"I dare say it runs up to about a hundred and fifty."

We were both silent for a little.

"I suppose you write a good hand, eh?" I began again.

The young man grinned from ear to ear, went into the office and brought in a sheet covered with writing.

"This is my writing," he announced, still with the same smile on his face.

I looked at it; on the square sheet of grayish paper there was written, in a good bold hand, the following document:

"ORDER: From the Chief Office of the Manor of Ananyevo to the Agent, Mihal Vikulov. No. 209.

"*Whereas,* Some person unknown entered the garden at Ananyevo last night in an intoxicated condition, and with unseemly songs waked the French governess, Madame Engêne, and disturbed her; and whether the watchman saw anything, and who were on watch in the garden and permitted such disorderliness: as regards all the above-written matters, your orders are to investigate in detail, and report immediately to the Office.

"*Head Clerk,* NIKOLAI HVOSTOV."

A huge heraldic seal was attached to the order, with the inscription: "Seal of the chief office of the manor of Ananyevo;" and below stood the signature: "To be executed exactly, Elena Losnyakov."

"Your lady signed it herself, eh?" I queried.

"To be sure; she always signs herself. Without that the order would be of no effect."

"Well, and now shall you send this order to the agent?"

"No, sir. He'll come himself and read it. That's to say, it'll be read to him; you see, he's no scholar." The clerk on duty was silent again for a while. "But what do you say?" he added, simpering; "is it well written?"

"Very well written."

"It wasn't composed, I must confess, by me. Konstantin is the great one for that."

"What?— Do you mean the orders have first to be composed among you?"

"Why, how else could we do? Couldn't write them off straight without making a fair copy."

"And what salary do you get?" I inquired.

"Thirty-five rubles, and five rubles for boots."

"And are you satisfied?"

"Of course I am satisfied. It's not every one can get into an office like ours. It was God's will, in my case, to be sure; I'd an uncle who was in service as a butler."

"And you're well off?"

"Yes, sir. Though, to tell the truth," he went on, with a sigh, "a place at a merchant's, for instance, is better for the likes of us. At a merchant's they're very well off. Yesterday evening a merchant came to us from Venev, and his man got talking to me— Yes, that's a good place, no doubt about it; a very good place."

"Why? Do the merchants pay more wages?"

"Lord preserve us! Why, a merchant would soon give you the sack if you asked him for wages. No, at a merchant's you must live on trust and on fear. He'll give you food, and drink, and clothes, and all. If you give him satisfaction, he'll do more— Talk of wages, indeed! You don't need them— And a merchant, too, lives in plain Russian style, like ourselves; you go with him on a journey—he has tea, and you have it; what he eats, you eat. A merchant—one can put up with; a merchant's a very different thing from what a gentleman is; a merchant's not whimsical; if he's out of temper, he'll give you a blow, and there it ends. He doesn't nag nor sneer— But with a gentleman it's a

woful business! Nothing's as he likes it—this is not right, and that he can't fancy. You hand him a glass of water or something to eat: 'Ugh, the water stinks! positively stinks!' You take it out, stay a minute outside the door, and bring it back: 'Come, now, that's good; this doesn't stink now.' And as for the ladies, I tell you, the ladies are something beyond everything!—and the young ladies above all!—"

"Fedyushka!" came the fat man's voice from the office. The clerk went out quickly. I drank a glass of tea, lay down on the sofa, and fell asleep. I slept for two hours.

When I woke I meant to get up, but I was overcome by laziness; I closed my eyes, but did not fall asleep again. On the other side of the partition, in the office, they were talking in subdued voices. Unconsciously I began to listen.

"Quite so, quite so, Nikolai Eremyitch,' one voice was saying; "quite so. One can't but take that into account; yes, certainly! Hm!" The speaker coughed.

"You may believe me, Gavrila Antonitch," replied the fat man's voice; "don't I know how things are done here? Judge for yourself."

"Who does, if you don't, Nikolai Eremyitch? You're, one may say, the first person here. Well, then, how's it to be?" pursued the voice I did not recognize; "what decision are we to come to, Nikolai Eremyitch? Allow me to put the question."

"What decision, Gavrila Antonitch? The thing depends, so to say, on you; you don't seem overanxious."

"Upon my word, Nikolai Eremyitch, what do you mean? Our business is trading, buying; it's our business to buy. That's what we live by, Nikolai Eremyitch, one may say."

"Eight rubles a measure," said the fat man emphatically.

A sigh was audible.

"Nikolai Eremyitch, sir, you ask a heavy price."

"Impossible, Gavrila Antonitch, to do otherwise; I speak as before God Almighty; impossible."

Silence followed.

I got up softly and looked through a crack in the partition. The fat man was sitting with his back to me. Facing him sat a merchant, a man about forty, lean and pale, who looked as if he had been rubbed with oil. He was incessantly fingering his beard, and very rapidly blinking and twitching his lips.

"Wonderful the young green crops this year, one may say," he began again; "I've been going about everywhere admiring them. All the way from Voronezh they've come up wonderfully, first-class, one may say."

"The crops are pretty fair, certainly," answered the head clerk; "but you know the saying, Gavrila Antonitch, autumn bids fair, but spring may be foul."

"That's so, indeed, Nikolai Eremyitch; all is in God's hands; it's the absolute truth what you've just remarked, sir— But perhaps your visitor's awake now?"

The fat man turned round—listened—

"No, he's asleep. He may, though—"

He went to the door.

"No, he's asleep," he repeated, and went back to his place.

"Well, so what are we to say, Nikolai Eremyitch?" the merchant began again; "we must bring our little business to a conclusion— Let it be so, Nikolai Eremyitch, let it be so," he went on, blinking incessantly; "two gray notes and a white for your favor, and there" (he nodded in the direction of the house), "six and a half. Done, eh?"

"Four gray notes," answered the clerk.

"Come, three, then."

"Four grays and no white."

"Three, Nikolai Eremyitch."

"Three and a half, and not a farthing less."

"Three, Nikolai Eremyitch."

"You're not talking sense, Gavrila Antonitch."

"My, what a pig-headed fellow!" muttered the merchant. "Then I'd better arrange it with the lady herself."

"That's as you like," answered the fat man; "far better, I should say. Why should you worry yourself, after all? Much better, indeed!"

"Well, well! Nikolai Eremyitch. I lost my temper for a minute! That was nothing but talk."

"No, really, why—"

"Nonsense, I tell you—I tell you I was joking. Well, take your three and a half; there's no doing anything with you."

"I ought to have got four, but I was in too great a hurry—like an ass!" muttered the fat man.

"Then up there at the house, six and a half, Nikolai Eremyitch; the corn will be sold for six and a half?"

"Six and a half, as we said already."

"Well, your hand on that then, Nikolai Eremyitch." The merchant clapped his outstretched fingers into the clerk's palm. "And good-by, in God's name!" The merchant got up. "So then, Nikolai Eremyitch, sir, I'll go now to your lady, and bid them send up my name, and so I'll say to her, 'Nikolai Eremyitch,' I'll say, 'has made a bargain with me for six and a half.'"

"That's what you must say, Gavrila Antonitch."

"And now, allow me."

The merchant handed the manager a small roll of notes, bowed, shook his head, picked up his hat with two fingers, shrugged his shoulders, and, with a sort of undulating motion, went out, his boots creaking after the approved fashion. Nikolai Eremyitch went to the wall, and, as far as I could make out, began sorting the notes handed him by the merchant. A red head, adorned with thick whiskers, was thrust in at the door.

"Well?" asked the head; "all as it should be?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

The fat man made an angry gesture with his hand, and pointed to my room.

"Ah, all right!" responded the head, and vanished.

The fat man went up to the table, sat down, opened a book, took out a reckoning frame, and began shift-

ing the beads to and fro as he counted, using not the forefinger, but the third finger of his right hand, which has a much more showy effect.

The clerk on duty came in.

"What is it?"

"Sidor is here from Goloplek."

"Oh! ask him in. Wait a bit, wait a bit— First go and look whether the strange gentleman's still asleep, or whether he has waked up."

The clerk on duty came cautiously into my room. I laid my head on my game-bag, which served me as a pillow, and closed my eyes.

"He's asleep," whispered the clerk on duty, returning to the counting-house.

The fat man muttered something.

"Well, send Sidor in," he said at last.

I got up again.

A peasant of about thirty, of huge stature, came in—a red-cheeked, vigorous-looking fellow, with brown hair, and a short curly beard. He crossed himself, praying to the holy image, bowed to the head clerk, held his hat before him in both hands, and stood erect.

"Good day, Sidor," said the fat man, tapping with the reckoning beads.

"Good day to you, Nikolai Eremyitch."

"Well, what are the roads like?"

"Pretty fair, Nikolai Eremyitch. A bit muddy." The peasant spoke slowly and not loud.

"Wife quite well?"

"She's all right!"

The peasant gave a sigh and shifted one leg forward. Nikolai Eremyitch put his pen behind his ear, and blew his nose.

"Well, what have you come about?" he proceeded to inquire, putting his check handkerchief into his pocket.

"Why, they do say, Nikolai Eremyitch, they're asking for carpenters from us."

"Well, aren't there any among you, hey?"

"To be sure there are, Nikolai Eremyitch; our place is right in the woods; our earnings are all from the wood, to be sure. But it's the busy time, Nikolai Eremyitch. Where's the time to come from?"

"The time to come from! Busy time! I dare say you're so eager to work for outsiders, and don't care to work for your mistress— It's all the same!"

"The work's all the same, certainly, Nikolai Eremyitch—but—"

"Well?"

"The pay's—very—"

"What next! You've been spoiled; that's what it is. Get along with you!"

"And what's more, Nikolai Eremyitch, there'll be only a week's work, but they'll keep us hanging on a month. One time there's not material enough, and another time they'll send us into the garden to weed the path."

"What of it? Our lady herself is pleased to give the order, so it's useless you and me talking about it."

Sidor was silent; he began shifting from one leg to the other.

Nikolai Eremyitch put his head on one side, and began busily playing with the reckoning beads.

"Our—peasants—Nikolai Eremyitch—" Sidor began at last, hesitating over each word, "sent word to your honor—there is—see here—" He thrust his big hand into the bosom of his coat, and began to pull out a folded linen kerchief with a red border.

"What are you thinking of? Goodness, idiot, are you out of your senses?" the fat man interposed hurriedly. "Go on; go to my cottage," he continued, almost shoving the bewildered peasant out; "ask for my wife there—she'll give you some tea; I'll be round directly; go on. For goodness' sake, I tell you, go on."

Sidor went away.

"Ugh!—what a bear!" the head clerk muttered after him, shaking his head, and set to work again on his reckoning frame.

Suddenly shouts of "Kuprya! Kuprya! there's no knocking down Kuprya!" were heard in the street and on the steps, and a little later there came into the counting-house a small man of sickly appearance, with an extraordinarily long nose and large, staring eyes, who carried himself with a great air of superiority. He was dressed in a ragged little old surtout, with a plush collar and diminutive buttons. He carried a bundle of firewood on his shoulder. Five house-serfs were crowding round him, all shouting, "Kuprya! there's no suppressing Kuprya! Kuprya's been turned stoker; Kuprya's turned a stoker!" But the man in the coat with the plush collar did not pay the slightest attention to the uproar made by his companions, and

was not in the least out of countenance. With measured steps he went up to the stove, flung down his load, straightened himself, took out of his tail-pocket a snuff-box, and with round eyes began helping himself to a pinch of dry trefoil mixed with ashes. At the entrance of this noisy party the fat man had at first knitted his brows and risen from his seat, but, seeing what it was, he smiled, and only told them not to shout. "There's a sportsman," said he, "asleep in the next room."

"What sort of sportsman?" two of them asked with one voice.

"A gentleman."

"Ah!"

"Let them make a row," said the man with the plush collar, waving his arms; "what do I care, so long as they don't touch me? They've turned me into a stoker—"

"A stoker! a stoker!" the others put in gleefully.

"It's the mistress's orders," he went on, with a shrug of his shoulders; "but just you wait a bit—they'll turn you into swineherds yet. But I've been a tailor, and a good tailor too, learned my trade in the best house in Moscow, and worked for generals—and nobody can take that from me. And what have you to boast of? What? you're a pack of idlers, not worth your salt; that's what you are! Turn me off! I shan't die of hunger; I shall be all right; give me a passport. I'd send a good rent home, and satisfy the masters. But what would you do? You'd die off like flies, that's what you'd do!"

"That's a nice lie!" interposed a pockmarked lad with white eyelashes, a red cravat, and ragged elbows. "You went off with a passport sharp enough, but never a halfpenny of rent did the masters see from you, and you never earned a farthing for yourself; you just managed to crawl home again, and you've never had a new rag on you since."

"Ah, well, what could one do, Konstantin Narkizitch?" responded Kuprya; "a man falls in love—a man's ruined and done for! You go through what I have, Konstantin Narkizitch, before you blame me!"

"And you picked out a nice one to fall in love with! —a regular fright."

"No, you mustn't say that, Konstantin Narkizitch."

"Who's going to believe that? I've seen her, you know; I saw her with my own eyes last year in Moscow."

"Last year she had gone off a little, certainly," observed Kuprya.

"No, gentlemen, I tell you what," a tall, thin man, with a face spotted with pimples, a valet probably, from his frizzed and pomatumed head, remarked in a careless and disdainful voice; "let Kuprya Afanasyitch sing us his song. Come on, now; begin, Kuprya Afanasyitch."

"Yes! yes!" put in the others. "Hoorah for Alexandra! That's one for Kuprya; 'pon my soul— Sing away, Kuprya!— You're a regular brick, Alexandra!" (Serfs often use feminine terminations in referring to a man as an expression of endearment.) "Sing away!"

"This is not the place to sing," Kuprya replied firmly; "this is the manor counting-house."

"And what's that to do with you? you've got your eye on a place as clerk, eh?" answered Konstantin with a coarse laugh. "That's what it is!"

"Everything rests with the mistress," observed the poor wretch.

"There, that's what he's got his eye on! a fellow like him! oo! oo! a!"

And they all roared; some rolled about with merriment. Louder than all laughed a lad of fifteen, probably the son of an aristocrat among the house-serfs; he wore a waistcoat with bronze buttons, and a cravat of lilac color, and had already had time to fill out his waistcoat.

"Come, tell us, confess now, Kuprya," Nikolai Eremyitch began complacently, obviously tickled and diverted himself; "is it bad being stoker? Is it an easy job, eh?"

"Nikolai Eremyitch," began Kuprya, "you're head clerk among us now, certainly; there's no disputing that, no; but you know you have been in disgrace yourself, and you too have lived in a peasant's hut."

"You'd better look out and not forget yourself in my place," the fat man interrupted emphatically; "people joke with a fool like you; you ought, you fool, to have sense, and be grateful to them for taking notice of a fool like you."

"It was a slip of the tongue, Nikolai Eremyitch; I beg your pardon—"

"Yes, indeed, a slip of the tongue."

The door opened and a little page ran in.

"Nikolai Eremyitch, mistress wants you."

"Who's with the mistress?" he asked the page.

"Aksinya Nikitishna, and a merchant from Venev."

"I'll be there this minute. And you, mates," he continued in a persuasive voice, "better move off out of here with the newly appointed stoker; if the German pops in, he'll make a complaint for certain."

The fat man smoothed his hair, coughed into his hand, which was almost completely hidden in his coat-sleeve, buttoned himself, and set off with rapid strides to see the lady of the manor. In a little while the whole party trailed out after him, together with Kuprya. My old friend, the clerk on duty, was left alone. He set to work mending the pens, and dropped asleep in his chair. A few flies promptly seized the opportunity and settled on his mouth. A mosquito alighted on his forehead, and, stretching its legs out with a regular motion, slowly buried its sting into his flabby flesh. The same red head with whiskers showed itself again at the door, looked in, looked again, and then came into the office, together with the rather ugly body belonging to it.

"Fedyushka! eh, Fedyushka! always asleep," said the head.

The clerk on duty opened his eyes and got up from his seat.

"Nikolai Eremyitch has gone to the mistress?"

"Yes, Vassily Nikolaevitch."

"Ah! ah!" thought I; "this is he, the head cashier."

The head cashier began walking about the room.

He really slunk rather than walked, and altogether resembled a cat. An old black frock-coat with very narrow skirts hung about his shoulders; he kept one hand in his bosom, while the other was forever fumbling about his high, narrow horse-hair collar, and he turned his head with a certain effort. He wore noiseless kid boots, and trod very softly.

"The landowner, Yagushkin, was asking for you to-day," added the clerk on duty.

"Hm, asking for me? What did he say?"

"Said he'd go to Tyutyurov this evening and would wait for you. 'I want to discuss some business with Vassily Nikolaevitch,' said he, but what the business was he didn't say; 'Vassily Nikolaevitch will know,' says he."

"Hm!" replied the head cashier, and he went up to the window.

"Is Nikolai Eremyitch in the counting-house?" a loud voice was heard asking in the outer room, and a tall man, apparently angry, with an irregular but bold and expressive face, and rather clean in his dress, stepped over the threshold.

"Isn't he here?" he inquired, looking rapidly round.

"Nikolai Eremyitch is with the mistress," responded the cashier. "Tell me what you want, Pavel Andreitch; you can tell me— What is it you want?"

"What do I want? You want to know what I want?" The cashier gave a sickly nod. "I want to give him a lesson, the fat, greasy villain, the scoundrelly tell-tale!— I'll give him a tale to tell!"

Pavel flung himself into a chair.

"What are you saying, Pavel Andreitch! Calm yourself— Aren't you ashamed? Don't forget whom you're talking about, Pavel Andreitch!" lisped the cashier.

"Forget whom I'm talking about? What do I care for his being made head clerk? A fine person they've found to promote, there's no denying that! They've let the goat loose in the kitchen garden, you may say!"

"Hush, hush, Pavel Andreitch, hush! drop that— what rubbish are you talking?"

"So Master Fox is beginning to fawn? I will wait for him," Pavel said with passion, and he struck a blow on the table. "Ah, here he's coming!" he added with a look at the window; "speak of the devil. With your kind permission!" He got up.

Nikolai Eremyitch came into the counting-house. His face was shining with satisfaction, but he was rather taken aback at seeing Pavel Andreitch.

"Good day to you, Nikolai Eremyitch," said Pavel in a significant tone, advancing deliberately to meet him.

The head clerk made no reply. The face of the merchant showed itself in the doorway.

"What, won't you deign to answer me?" pursued Pavel. "But no—no," he added; "that's not it; there's no getting anything by shouting and abuse. No, you'd better tell me in a friendly way, Nikolai Eremyitch; what do you persecute me for? what do you want to ruin me for? Come, speak, speak."

"This is no fit place to come to an understanding with you," the head clerk answered in some agitation,

"and no fit time. But I must say I wonder at one thing: what makes you suppose I want to ruin you, or that I'm persecuting you? And if you come to that, how can I persecute you? You're not in my counting-house."

"I should hope not," answered Pavel; "that would be the last straw! But why are you humbugging, Nikolai Eremyitch?— You understand me, you know."

"No, I don't understand."

"No, you do understand."

"No, by God, I don't understand!"

"Swearing, too! Well, tell us, since it's come to that: have you no fear of God? Why can't you let the poor girl live in peace? What do you want of her?"

"Whom are you talking of?" the fat man asked with feigned amazement.

"Ugh! doesn't know; what next? I'm talking of Tatyana. Have some fear of God—what do you want to revenge yourself for? You ought to be ashamed: a married man like you, with children as big as I am; it's a very different thing with me— I mean marriage: I'm acting straightforwardly."

"How am I to blame in that, Pavel Andreitch? The mistress won't permit you to marry; it's her seigniorial will! What have I to do with it?"

"Why, haven't you been plotting with that old hag, the housekeeper, eh? Haven't you been telling tales, eh? Tell me, aren't you bringing all sorts of stories up against the defenseless girl? I suppose it's not your doing that she's been degraded from laundrymaid to

washing dishes in the scullery? And it's not your doing that she's beaten and dressed in sackcloth?— You ought to be ashamed, you ought to be ashamed— an old man like you! You know there's a paralytic stroke always hanging over you— You will have to answer to God."

"You're abusive, Pavel Andreitch, you're abusive— You shan't have a chance to be insolent much longer."

Pavel fired up.

"What? You dare to threaten me?" he said passionately. "You think I'm afraid of you. No, my man, I'm not come to that! What have I to be afraid of?— I can make my bread everywhere. For you, now, it's another thing! It's only here you can live and tell tales, and filch—"

"Fancy the conceit of the fellow!" interrupted the clerk, who was also beginning to lose patience; "an apothecary's assistant, simply an apothecary's assistant, a wretched leech; and listen to him—fie upon you! you're a high and mighty personage!"

"Yes, an apothecary's assistant, and except for this apothecary's assistant you'd have been rotting in the graveyard by now— It was some devil drove me to cure him," he added between his teeth.

"You cured me?— No, you tried to poison me; you dosed me with aloes," the clerk put in.

"What was I to do if nothing but aloes had any effect on you?"

"The use of aloes is forbidden by the Board of Health," pursued Nikolai. "I'll lodge a complaint

against you yet— You tried to compass my death —that was what you did! But the Lord suffered it not."

"Hush, now, that's enough, gentlemen," the cashier was beginning—

"Stand off!" bawled the clerk. "He tried to poison me! Do you understand that?"

"That's very likely— Listen, Nikolai Eremyitch," Pavel began in despairing accents. "For the last time, I beg you— You force me to it— I can't stand it any longer. Let us alone, do you hear? or else, by God, it'll go ill with one or other of us—I mean with you!"

The fat man flew into a rage.

"I'm not afraid of you!" he shouted; "do you hear, milksop? I got the better of your father; I broke his horns—a warning to you; take care!"

"Don't talk of my father, Nikolai Eremyitch."

"Get away! who are you to give me orders?"

"I tell you, don't talk of him!"

"And I tell you, don't forget yourself— However necessary you think yourself, if our lady has a choice between us, it's not you'll be kept, my dear! None's allowed to mutiny, mind!" Pavel was shaking with fury. "As for the wench, Tatyana, she deserves— wait a bit, she'll get something worse!"

Pavel dashed forward with uplifted fists, and the clerk rolled heavily on the floor.

"Handcuff him, handcuff him," groaned Nikolai Eremyitch—

I won't take upon myself to describe the end of this

scene; I fear I have wounded the reader's delicate susceptibilities as it is.

The same day I returned home. A week later I heard that Madame Losnyakov had kept both Pavel and Nikolai in her service, but had sent away the girl Tatyana; it appeared she was not wanted.

THE THIEF

BY FEODOR MIKAILOVITCH DOSTOIEVSKI

Dostoievski, the son of a Moscow physician, was born in 1821 and died of consumption in 1881. For his connection with a revolutionary plot he was condemned to death in 1849, but on the scaffold his sentence was commuted to hard labor in Siberia. While his writings are not distinguished in form or style, the author's intimate knowledge of the life he portrays and his wonderful power of analysis unite to create an impression of life that is all the more poignant because it is so scientifically accurate.

The degree of relationship between "The Thief" and Gogol's "The Cloak" will be readily perceived.

"Crime and Punishment" is the only one of the few of his books translated into English that is at all well known to American readers.

THE THIEF

BY FEODOR DOSTOIEVSKI

ONE morning, just as I was about to leave for my place of employment, Agrafena (my cook, laundress, and housekeeper all in one person) entered my room, and, to my great astonishment, started a conversation.

She was a quiet, simple-minded woman, who during the whole six years of her stay with me had never spoken more than two or three words daily, and that in reference to my dinner—at least, I had never heard her.

"I have come to you, sir," she suddenly began, "about the renting out of the little spare room."

"What spare room?"

"The one that is near the kitchen, of course; which should it be?"

"Why?"

"Why do people generally take lodgers? Because."

"But who will take it?"

"Who will take it! A lodger, of course! Who should take it?"

"But there is hardly room in there, mother mine, for a bed; it will be too cramped. How can one live in it?"

Translated by Lizzie B. Gorin. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

"But why live in it! He only wants a place to sleep in; he will live on the window-seat."

"What window-seat?"

"How is that? What window-seat? As if you did not know! The one in the hall. He will sit on it and sew, or do something else. But maybe he will sit on a chair; he has a chair of his own—and a table also, and everything."

"But who is he?"

"A nice, worldly-wise man. I will cook for him and will charge him only three rubles in silver a month for room and board—"

At last, after long endeavor, I found out that some elderly man had talked Agrafena into taking him into the kitchen as lodger. When Agrafena once got a thing into her head that thing had to be; otherwise I knew I would have no peace. On those occasions when things did go against her wishes, she immediately fell into a sort of brooding, became exceedingly melancholy, and continued in that state for two or three weeks. During this time the food was invariably spoiled, the linen was missing, the floors unscrubbed; in a word, a lot of unpleasant things happened. I had long ago become aware of the fact that this woman of very few words was incapable of forming a decision, or of coming to any conclusion based on her own thoughts; and yet when it happened that by some means there had formed in her weak brain a sort of idea or wish to undertake a thing, to refuse her permission to carry out this idea or wish meant simply to kill her morally for some time. And so, acting in

the sole interest of my peace of mind, I immediately agreed to this new proposition of hers.

"Has he at least the necessary papers, a passport, or anything of the kind?"

"How then? Of course he has. A fine man like him—who has seen the world— He promised to pay three rubles a month."

On the very next day the new lodger appeared in my modest bachelor quarters; but I did not feel annoyed in the least—on the contrary, in a way I was glad of it. I live a very solitary, hermit-like life. I have almost no acquaintance and seldom go out. Having led the existence of a moor-cock for ten years, I was naturally used to solitude. But ten, fifteen years or more of the same seclusion in company with a person like Agrafena, and in the same bachelor dwelling, was indeed a joyless prospect. Therefore, the presence of another quiet, unobtrusive man in the house was, under these circumstances, a real blessing.

Agrafena had spoken the truth: the lodger was a man who had seen much in his life. From his passport it appeared that he was a retired soldier, which I noticed even before I looked at the passport.

As soon as I glanced at him in fact.

Astafi Ivanich, my lodger, belonged to the better sort of soldiers, another thing I noticed as soon as I saw him. We liked each other from the first, and our life flowed on peacefully and comfortably. The best thing was that Astafi Ivanich could at times tell a good story, incidents of his own life. In the general tediousness of my humdrum existence, such a nar-

rator was a veritable treasure. Once he told me a story which has made a lasting impression upon me; but first the incident which led to the story.

Once I happened to be left alone in the house, Astafi and Agrafena having gone out on business. Suddenly I heard some one enter, and I felt that it must be a stranger; I went out into the corridor and found a man of short stature, and notwithstanding the cold weather, dressed very thinly and without an overcoat.

"What is it you want?"

"The Government clerk Alexandrov? Does he live here?"

"There is no one here by that name, little brother; good day."

"The porter told me he lived here," said the visitor, cautiously retreating toward the door.

"Go on, go on, little brother; be off!"

Soon after dinner the next day, when Astafi brought in my coat, which he had repaired for me, I once more heard a strange step in the corridor. I opened the door.

The visitor of the day before, calmly and before my very eyes, took my short coat from the rack, put it under his arm, and ran out.

Agrafena, who had all the time been looking at him in open-mouthed surprise through the kitchen door, was seemingly unable to stir from her place and rescue the coat. But Astafi Ivanich rushed after the rascal, and, out of breath and panting, returned empty-handed. The man had vanished as if the earth had swallowed him.

"It is too bad, really, Astafi Ivanich," I said. "It is well that I have my cloak left. Otherwise the scoundrel would have put me out of service altogether."

But Astafi seemed so much affected by what had happened that as I gazed at him I forgot all about the theft. He could not regain his composure, and every once in a while threw down the work which occupied him, and began once more to recount how it had all happened, where he had been standing, while only two steps away my coat had been stolen before his very eyes, and how he could not even catch the thief. Then once more he resumed his work, only to throw it away again, and I saw him go down to the porter, tell him what had happened, and reproach him with not taking sufficient care of the house, that such a theft could be perpetrated in it. When he returned he began to upbraid Agrafena. Then he again resumed his work, muttering to himself for a long time —how this is the way it all was—how he stood here, and I there, and how before our very eyes, no farther than two steps away, the coat was taken off its hanger, and so on. In a word, Astafi Ivanich, though he knew how to do certain things, worried a great deal over trifles.

"We have been fooled, Astafi Ivanich," I said to him that evening, handing him a glass of tea, and hoping from sheer ennui to call forth the story of the lost coat again, which by dint of much repetition had begun to sound extremely comical.

"Yes, we were fooled, sir. It angers me very much,

though the loss is not mine, and I think there is nothing so despicably low in this world as a thief. They steal what you buy by working in the sweat of your brow— Your time and labor— The loathsome creature! It sickens me to talk of it—pfui! It makes me angry to think of it. How is it, sir, that you do not seem to be at all sorry about it?"

"To be sure, Astafi Ivanich, one would much sooner see his things burn up than see a thief take them. It is exasperating—"

"Yes, it is annoying to have anything stolen from you. But of course there are thieves and thieves— I, for instance, met an honest thief through an accident."

"How is that? An honest thief? How can a thief be honest, Astafi Ivanich?"

"You speak truth, sir. A thief can not be an honest man. There never was such. I only wanted to say that he was an honest man, it seems to me, even though he stole. I was very sorry for him."

"And how did it happen, Astafi Ivanich?"

"It happened just two years ago. I was serving as house steward at the time, and the baron whom I served expected shortly to leave for his estate, so that I knew I would soon be out of a job, and then God only knew how I would be able to get along; and just then it was that I happened to meet in a tavern a poor forlorn creature, Emelian by name. Once upon a time he had served somewhere or other, but had been driven out of service on account of tippling. Such an unworthy creature as he was! He wore whatever came

along. At times I even wondered if he wore a shirt under his shabby cloak; everything he could put his hands on was sold for drink. But he was not a rowdy. Oh, no; he was of a sweet, gentle nature, very kind and tender to every one; he never asked for anything, was, if anything, too conscientious— Well, you could see without asking when the poor fellow was dying for a drink, and of course you treated him to one. Well, we became friendly, that is, he attached himself to me like a little dog—you go this way, he follows—and all this after our very first meeting.

"Of course he remained with me that night; his passport was in order and the man seemed all right. On the second night also. On the third he did not leave the house, sitting on the window-seat of the corridor the whole day, and of course he remained over that night too. Well, I thought, just see how he has forced himself upon you. You have to give him to eat and to drink and to shelter him. All a poor man needs is some one to sponge upon him. I soon found out that once before he had attached himself to a man just as he had now attached himself to me; they drank together, but the other one soon died of some deep-seated sorrow. I thought and thought: What shall I do with him? Drive him out—my conscience would not allow it—I felt very sorry for him: he was such a wretched, forlorn creature, terrible! And so dumb he did not ask for anything, only sat quietly and looked you straight in the eyes, just like a faithful little dog. That is how drink can ruin a man. And I thought to myself: Well, suppose I say to him: 'Get

out of here, Emelian; you have nothing to do in here, you come to the wrong person; I will soon have nothing to eat myself, so how do you expect me to feed *you?*' And I tried to imagine what he would do after I'd told him all this. And I could see how he would look at me for a long time after he had heard me, without understanding a word; how at last he would understand what I was driving at, and, rising from the window-seat, take his little bundle—I see it before me now—a red-checked little bundle full of holes, in which he kept God knows what, and which he carted along with him wherever he went; how he would brush and fix up his worn cloak a little, so that it would look a bit more decent and not show so much the holes and patches—he was a man of very fine feelings! How he would have opened the door afterward and would have gone forth with tears in his eyes.

"Well, should a man be allowed to perish altogether? I all at once felt heartily sorry for him; but at the same time I thought: And what about me, am I any better off? And I said to myself: Well, Emelian, you will not feast overlong at my expense; soon I shall have to move from here myself, and then you will not find me again. Well, sir, my baron soon left for his estate with all his household, telling me before he went that he was very well satisfied with my services, and would gladly employ me again on his return to the capital. A fine man my baron was but he died the same year.

"Well, after I had escorted my baron and his family a little way, I took my things and the little money

I had saved up, and went to live with an old woman I knew, who rented out a corner of the room she occupied by herself. She used to be a nurse in some well-to-do family, and now, in her old age, they had pensioned her off. Well, I thought to myself, now it is good-by to you, Emelian, dear man, you will not find me now! And what do you think, sir? When I returned in the evening—I had paid a visit to an acquaintance of mine—whom should I see but Emelian sitting quietly upon my trunk with his red-checked bundle by his side. He was wrapped up in his poor little cloak, and was awaiting my home-coming. He must have been quite lonesome, because he had borrowed a prayer-book of the old woman and held it upside down. He had found me after all! My hands fell helplessly at my sides. Well, I thought, there is nothing to be done, why did I not drive him away first off? And I only asked him: 'Have you taken your passport along, Emelian?' Then I sat down, sir, and began to turn the matter over in my mind: Well, could he, a roving man, be much in my way? And after I had considered it well, I decided that he would not, and besides, he would be of very little expense to me. Of course, he would have to be fed, but what does that amount to? Some bread in the morning and, to make it a little more appetizing, a little onion or so. For the midday meal again some bread and onion, and for the evening again onion and bread, and some kvass, and, if some cabbage-soup should happen to come our way, then we could both fill up to the throat. I ate little, and Emelian, who was a drinking

man, surely ate almost nothing: all he wanted was vodka. He would be the undoing of me with his drinking; but at the same time I felt a curious feeling creep over me. It seemed as if life would be a burden to me if Emelian went away. And so I decided then and there to be his father-benefactor. I would put him on his legs, I thought, save him from perishing, and gradually wean him from drink. Just you wait, I thought. Stay with me, Emelian, but stand pat now. Obey the word of command!

"Well, I thought to myself, I will begin by teaching him some work, but not at once; let him first enjoy himself a bit, and I will in the mean while look around and discover what he finds easiest, and would be capable of doing, because you must know, sir, a man must have a calling and a capacity for a certain work to be able to do it properly. And I began stealthily to observe him. And a hard subject he was, that Emelian! At first I tried to get at him with a kind word. Thus and thus I would speak to him: 'Emelian, you had better take more care of yourself and try to fix yourself up a little.

" 'Give up drinking. Just look at yourself, man, you are all ragged, your cloak looks more like a sieve than anything else. It is not nice. It is about time for you to come to your senses and know when you have had enough.'

"He listened to me, my Emelian did, with lowered head; he had already reached that state, poor fellow, when the drink affected his tongue and he could not utter a sensible word. You talk to him about cucum-

bers, and he answers beans. He listened, listened to me for a long time, and then he would sigh deeply.

"'What are you sighing for, Emelian?' I ask him.

"'Oh, it is nothing, Astafi Ivanich, do not worry. Only what I saw to-day, Astafi Ivanich—two women fighting about a basket of huckleberries that one of them had upset by accident.'

"'Well, what of that?'

"'And the woman whose berries were scattered snatched a like basket of huckleberries from the other woman's hand, and not only threw them on the ground, but stamped all over them.'

"'Well, but what of that, Emelian?'

"'Ech!' I think to myself, 'Emelian! You have lost your poor wits through the cursed drink!'

"'And again,' Emelian says, 'a baron lost a bill on the Gorokhova Street—or was it on the Sadova? A muzhik saw him drop it, and says, "My luck," but here another one interfered and says, "No, it is my luck! I saw it first. . . ."'

"Well, Emelian?'

"'And the two muzhiks started a fight, Astafi Ivanich, and the upshot was that a policeman came, picked up the money, handed it back to the baron, and threatened to put the muzhiks under lock for raising a disturbance.'

"'But what of that? What is there wonderful or edifying in that, Emelian?'

"'Well, nothing, but the people laughed, Astafi Ivanich.'

"'E-ch, Emelian! What have the people to do

with it?' I said. 'You have sold your immortal soul for a copper. But do you know what I will tell you, Emelian?'

"'What, Astafi Ivanich?'

"'You'd better take up some work, really you should. I am telling you for the hundredth time that you should have pity on yourself!'

"'But what shall I do, Astafi Ivanich? I do not know where to begin and no one would employ me, Astafi Ivanich.'

"'That is why they drove you out of service, Emelian; it is all on account of drink!'

"'And to-day,' said Emelian, 'they called Vlass the barkeeper into the office.'

"'What did they call him for, Emelian?' I asked.

"'I don't know why, Astafi Ivanich. I suppose it was needed, so they called him.'

"'Ech,' I thought to myself, 'no good will come of either of us, Emelian! It is for our sins that God is punishing us!'

"Well, what could a body do with such a man, sir!

"But he was sly, the fellow was, I tell you! He listened to me, listened, and at last it seems it began to tire him, and as quick as he would notice that I was growing angry he would take his cloak and slip out—and that was the last to be seen of him! He would not show up the whole day, and only in the evening would he return, as drunk as a lord. Who treated him to drinks, or where he got the money for it, God only knows; not from me, surely! . . .

"'Well,' I say to him, 'Emelian, you will have to give up drink, do you hear? you will have to give it up! The next time you return tipsy, you will have to sleep on the stairs. I'll not let you in!'

"After this Emelian kept to the house for two days; on the third he once more sneaked out. I wait and wait for him; he does not come! I must confess that I was kind of frightened; besides, I felt terribly sorry for him. What had I done to the poor devil! I thought. I must have frightened him off. Where could he have gone to now, the wretched creature? Great God, he may perish yet! The night passed and he did not return. In the morning I went out into the hall, and he was lying there with his head on the lower step, almost stiff with cold.

"'What is the matter with you, Emelian? The Lord save you! Why are you here?'

"'But you know, Astafi Ivanich,' he replied, 'you were angry with me the other day; I aggravated you, and you promised to make me sleep in the hall, and I—so I—did not dare—to come in—and lay down here.'

"'It would be better for you, Emelian,' I said, filled with anger and pity, 'to find a better employment than needlessly watching the stairs!'

"'But what other employment, Astafi Ivanich?'

"'Well, wretched creature that you are,' here anger had flamed up in me, 'if you would try to learn the tailoring art. Just look at the cloak you are wearing! Not only is it full of holes, but you are sweeping the stairs with it! You should at least take a needle and

mend it a little, so it would look more decent. E-ch, a wretched tippler you are, and nothing more!'

"Well, sir! What do you think! He did take the needle—I had told him only for fun, and there he got scared and actually took the needle. He threw off his cloak and began to put the thread through; well, it was easy to see what would come of it; his eyes began to fill and reddened, his hands trembled! He pushed and pushed the thread—could not get it through: he wetted it, rolled it between his fingers, smoothed it out, but it would not—go! He flung it from him and looked at me.

"'Well, Emelian!' I said, 'you served me right! If people had seen it I would have died with shame! I only told you all this for fun, and because I was angry with you. Never mind sewing; may the Lord keep you from sin! You need not do anything, only keep out of mischief, and do not sleep on the stairs and put me to shame thereby!'

"'But what shall I do, Astafi Ivanich; I know myself that I am always tipsy and unfit for anything! I only make you, my be—benefactor, angry for nothing.'

"And suddenly his bluish lips began to tremble, and a tear rolled down his unshaven, pale cheek, then another and another one, and he broke into a very flood of tears, my Emelian. Father in Heaven! I felt as if some one had cut me over the heart with a knife.

"'E-ch you, sensitive man; why, I never thought! And who *could* have thought such a thing! No, I'd

better give you up altogether, Emelian; do as you please.'

"Well, sir, what else is there to tell! But the whole thing is so insignificant and unimportant, it is really not worth while wasting words about it; for instance, you, sir, would not give two broken groschen for it; but I, I would give much, if I had much, that this thing had never happened! I owned, sir, a pair of breeches, blue, in checks, a first-class article, the devil take them—a rich landowner who came here on business ordered them from me, but refused afterward to take them, saying that they were too tight, and left them with me.

"Well, I thought, the cloth is of first-rate quality! I can get five rubles for them in the old-clothes market-place, and, if not, I can cut a fine pair of pantaloons out of them for some St. Petersburg gent, and have a piece left over for a vest for myself. Everything counts with a poor man! And Emelian was at that time in sore straits. I saw that he had given up drinking, first one day, then a second, and a third, and looked so downhearted and sad.

"Well, I thought, it is either that the poor fellow lacks the necessary coin or maybe he has entered on the right path, and has at last listened to good sense.

"Well, to make a long story short, an important holiday came just at that time, and I went to vespers. When I came back I saw Emelian sitting on the window-seat as drunk as a lord. Eh! I thought, so that is what you are about! And I go to my trunk to get out something I needed. I look! The breeches

are not there. I rummage about in this place and that place: gone! Well, after I had searched all over and saw that they were missing for fair, I felt as if something had gone through me! I went after the old woman—as to Emelian, though there was evidence against him in his being drunk, I somehow never thought of him!

" 'No,' says my old woman; 'the good Lord keep you, gentleman, what do I need breeches for? can I wear them? I myself missed a skirt the other day. I know nothing at all about it.'

" 'Well,' I asked, 'has any one called here?'

" 'No one called,' she said. 'I was in all the time; your friend here went out for a short while and then came back; here he sits! Why don't you ask him?'

" 'Did you happen, for some reason or other, Emelian, to take the breeches out of the trunk? The ones, you remember, which were made for the landowner?'

" 'No,' he says, 'I have not taken them, Astafi Ivanich.'

" 'What *could* have happened to them?' Again I began to search, but nothing came of it! And Emelian sat and swayed to and fro on the window-seat.

"I was on my knees before the open trunk, just in front of him. Suddenly I threw a sidelong glance at him. Ech, I thought, and felt very hot round the heart, and my face grew very red. Suddenly my eyes encountered Emelian's.

" 'No,' he says, 'Astafi Ivanich. You perhaps think that I—you know what I mean—but I have not taken them.'

" 'But where have they gone, Emelian?'

" 'No,' he says, 'Astafi Ivanich, I have not seen them at all.'

" 'Well, then, you think they simply went and got lost by themselves, Emelian?'

" 'Maybe they did, Astafi Ivanich.'

"After this I would not waste another word on him. I rose from my knees, locked the trunk, and after I had lighted the lamp I sat down to work. I was remaking a vest for a government clerk, who lived on the floor below. But I was terribly rattled, just the same. It would have been much easier to bear, I thought, if all my wardrobe had burned to ashes. Emelian, it seems, felt that I was deeply angered. It is always so, sir, when a man is guilty; he always feels beforehand when trouble approaches, as a bird feels the coming storm.

" 'And do you know, Astafi Ivanich,' he suddenly began, 'the leach married the coachman's widow to-day.'

"I just looked at him; but, it seems, looked at him so angrily that he understood: I saw him rise from his seat, approach the bed, and begin to rummage in it, continually repeating: 'Where could they have gone, vanished, as if the devil had taken them!'

"I waited to see what was coming; I saw that my Emelian had crawled under the bed. I could contain myself no longer.

" 'Look here,' I said. 'What makes you crawl under the bed?'

" 'I am looking for the breeches, Astafi Ivanich,' said

Emelian from under the bed. 'Maybe they got here somehow or other.'

" 'But what makes you, sir (in my anger I addressed him as if he was—somebody), what makes you trouble yourself on account of such a plain man as I am; dirtying your knees for nothing!'

" 'But, Astafi Ivanich— I did not mean anything— I only thought maybe if we look for them here we may find them yet.'

" 'Mm! Just listen to me a moment, Emelian!'

" 'What, Astafi Ivanich?'

" 'Have you not simply stolen them from me like a rascally thief, serving me so for my bread and salt?' I said to him, beside myself with wrath at the sight of him crawling under the bed for something he knew was not there.

" 'No, Astafi Ivanich.' For a long time he remained lying flat under the bed. Suddenly he crawled out and stood before me—I seem to see him even now—as terrible a sight as sin itself.

" 'No,' he says to me in a trembling voice, shivering through all his body and pointing to his breast with his finger, so that all at once I became scared and could not move from my seat on the window. 'I have not taken your breeches, Astafi Ivanich.'

" 'Well,' I answered, 'Emelian, forgive me if in my foolishness I have accused you wrongfully. As to the breeches, let them go hang; we will get along without them. We have our hands, thank God, we will not have to steal, and now, too, we will not have to sponge on another poor man; we will earn our living.'

"Emelian listened to me and remained standing before me for some time, then he sat down and sat motionless the whole evening; when I lay down to sleep, he was still sitting in the same place.

"In the morning, when I awoke, I found him sleeping on the bare floor, wrapped up in his cloak; he felt his humiliation so strongly that he had no heart to go and lie down on the bed.

"Well, sir, from that day on I conceived a terrible dislike for the man; that is, rather, I hated him the first few days, feeling as if, for instance, my own son had robbed me and given me deadly offense. Ech, I thought, Emelian, Emelian! And Emelian, my dear sir, had gone on a two weeks' spree. Drunk to bestiality from morning till night. And during the whole two weeks he had not uttered a word. I suppose he was consumed the whole time by a deep-seated grief, or else he was trying in this way to make an end to himself. At last he gave up drinking. I suppose he had no longer the wherewithal to buy vodka —had drunk up every copeck—and he once more took up his old place on the window-seat. I remember that he sat there for three whole days without a word; suddenly I see him weep; sits there and cries, but what crying! The tears come from his eyes in showers, drip, drip, as if he did not know that he was shedding them. It is very painful, sir, to see a grown man weep, all the more when the man is of advanced years, like Emelian, and cries from grief and a sorrowful heart.

" 'What ails you, Emelian?' I say to him.

"He starts and shivers. This was the first time I had spoken to him since that eventful day.

" 'It is nothing—Astafi Ivanich.'

" 'God keep you, Emelian; never you mind it all. Let bygones be bygones. Don't take it to heart so, man!' I felt very sorry for him.

" 'It is only that—that I would like to do something —some kind of work, Astafi Ivanich.'

" 'But what kind of work, Emelian?'

" 'Oh, any kind. Maybe I will go into some kind of service, as before. I have already been at my former employer's asking. It will not do for me, Astafi Ivanich, to use you any longer. I, Astafi Ivanich, will perhaps obtain some employment, and then I will pay you for everything, food and all.'

" 'Don't, Emelian, don't. Well, let us say you committed a sin; well, it is all over! The devil take it all! Let us live as before—as if nothing had happened!"

" 'You, Astafi Ivanich, you are probably hinting about *that*. But I have not taken your breeches.'

" 'Well, just as you please, Emelian!'

" 'No, Astafi Ivanich, evidently I can not live with you longer. You will excuse me, Astafi Ivanich.'

" 'But God be with you, Emelian,' I said to him; 'who is it that is offending you or driving you out of the house? Is it I who am doing it?'

" 'No, but it is unseemly for me to misuse your hospitality any longer, Astafi Ivanich; 'twill be better to go.'

"I saw that he had in truth risen from his place and donned his ragged cloak—he felt offended, the man

did, and had gotten it into his head to leave, and—basta.

"'But where are you going, Emelian? Listen to sense: what are you? Where will you go?'

"'No, it is best so, Astafi Ivanich, do not try to keep me back,' and he once more broke into tears; 'let me be, Astafi Ivanich, you are no longer what you used to be.'

"'Why am I not? I am just the same. But you will perish when left alone—like a foolish little child, Emelian.'

"'No, Astafi Ivanich. Lately, before you leave the house, you have taken to locking your trunk, and I, Astafi Ivanich, see it and weep— No, it is better you should let me go, Astafi Ivanich, and forgive me if I have offended you in any way during the time we have lived together.'

"Well, sir! And so he did go away. I waited a day and thought: Oh, he will be back toward evening. But a day passes, then another, and he does not return. On the third—he does not return. I grew frightened, and a terrible sadness gripped at my heart. I stopped eating and drinking, and lay whole nights without closing my eyes. The man had wholly disarmed me! On the fourth day I went to look for him; I looked in all the taverns and pot-houses in the vicinity, and asked if any one had seen him. No, Emelian had wholly disappeared! Maybe he has done away with his miserable existence, I thought. Maybe, when in his cups, he has perished like a dog, somewhere under a fence. I came home half dead with fatigue and

despair, and decided to go out the next day again to look for him, cursing myself bitterly for letting the foolish, helpless man go away from me. But at dawn of the fifth day (it was a holiday) I heard the door creak. And whom should I see but Emelian! But in what a state! His face was bluish and his hair was full of mud, as if he had slept in the street; and he had grown thin, the poor fellow had, as thin as a rail. He took off his poor cloak, sat down on my trunk, and began to look at me. Well, sir, I was overjoyed, but at the same time felt a greater sadness than ever pulling at my heart-strings. This is how it was, sir: I felt that if a thing like that had happened to me, that is—I would sooner have perished like a dog, but would not have returned. And Emelian did. Well, naturally, it is hard to see a man in such a state. I began to coddle and to comfort him in every way.

"'Well,' I said, 'Emelian, I am very glad you have returned; if you had not come so soon, you would not have found me in, as I intended to go hunting for you. Have you had anything to eat?'

"'I have eaten, Astafi Ivanich.'

"'I doubt it. Well, here is some cabbage soup—left over from yesterday; a nice soup with some meat in it—not the meagre kind. And here you have some bread and a little onion. Go ahead and eat; it will do you good.'

"I served it to him; and immediately realized that he must have been starving for the last three days—such an appetite as he showed! So it was hunger that had driven him back to me. Looking at the poor

fellow, I was deeply touched, and decided to run into the nearby dram-shop. I will get him some vodka, I thought, to liven him up a bit and make peace with him. It is enough. I have nothing against the poor devil any longer. And so I brought the vodka and said to him: 'Here, Emelian, let us drink to each other's health in honor of the holiday. Come, take a drink. It will do you good.'

"He stretched out his hand, greedily stretched it out, you know, and stopped; then, after a while, he lifted the glass, carried it to his mouth, spilling the liquor on his sleeve; at last he did carry it to his mouth, but immediately put it back on the table.

" 'Well, why don't you drink, Emelian?'

" 'But no, I'll not, Astafi Ivanich.'

" 'You'll not drink it!'

" 'But I, Astafi Ivanich, I think—I'll not drink any more, Astafi Ivanich.'

" 'Is it for good you have decided to give it up, Emelian, or only for to-day?'

"He did not reply, and after a while I saw him lean his head on his hand, and I asked him: 'Are you not feeling well, Emelian?'

" 'Yes, pretty well, Astafi Ivanich.'

"I made him go to bed, and saw that he was truly in a bad way. His head was burning hot and he was shivering with ague. I sat by him the whole day; toward evening he grew worse. I prepared a meal for him of kvass, butter, and some onion, and threw in it a few bits of bread, and said to him: "Go ahead and take some food; maybe you will feel better!'

"But he only shook his head: 'No, Astafi Ivanich, I shall not have any dinner to-day.'

"I had some tea prepared for him, giving a lot of trouble to the poor old woman from whom I rented a part of the room—but he would not take even a little tea.

"Well, I thought to myself, it is a bad case. On the third morning I went to see the doctor, an acquaintance of mine, Dr. Kostopravov, who had treated me when I still lived in my last place. The doctor came, examined the poor fellow, and only said: 'There was no need of sending for me, he is already too far gone, but you can give him some powders which I will prescribe.'

"Well, I didn't give him the powders at all, as I understood that the doctor was only doing it for form's sake; and in the mean while came the fifth day.

"He lay dying before me, sir. I sat on the window-seat with some work I had on hand lying on my lap. The old woman was raking the stove. We were all silent, and my heart was breaking over this poor, shiftless creature, as if he were my own son whom I was losing. I knew that Emelian was gazing at me all the time; I noticed from the earliest morning that he longed to tell me something, but seemingly dared not. At last I looked at him, and saw that he did not take his eyes from me, but that whenever his eyes met mine, he immediately lowered his own.

" 'Astafi Ivanich!'

" 'What, Emelian?'

" 'What if my cloak should be carried over to the

old clothes market, would they give much for it, Astafi Ivanich?'

"'Well, I said, 'I do not know for certain, but three rubles they would probably give for it, Emelian.' I said it only to comfort the simple-minded creature; in reality they would have laughed in my face for even thinking to sell such a miserable, ragged thing.

"'And I thought that they might give a little more, Astafi Ivanich. It is made of cloth, so how is it that they would not wish to pay more than three rubles for it?'

"'Well, Emelian, if you wish to sell it, then of course you may ask more for it at first.'

"Emelian was silent for a moment, then he once more called to me.

"'Astafi Ivanich!'

"'What is it, Emelian?'

"'You will sell the cloak after I am no more; no need of burying me in it, I can well get along without it; it is worth something, and may come handy to you.'

"Here I felt such a painful gripping at my heart as I can not even express, sir. I saw that the sadness of approaching death had already come upon the man. Again we were silent for some time. About an hour passed in this way. I looked at him again and saw that he was still gazing at me, and when his eyes met mine he immediately lowered his.

"'Would you like a drink of cold water?' I asked him.

" 'Give me some, and may God repay you, Astafi Ivanich.'

" 'Would you like anything else, Emelian?'

" 'No, Astafi Ivanich, I do not want anything, but I—'

" 'What?'

" 'You know that—'

" 'What is it you want, Emelian?'

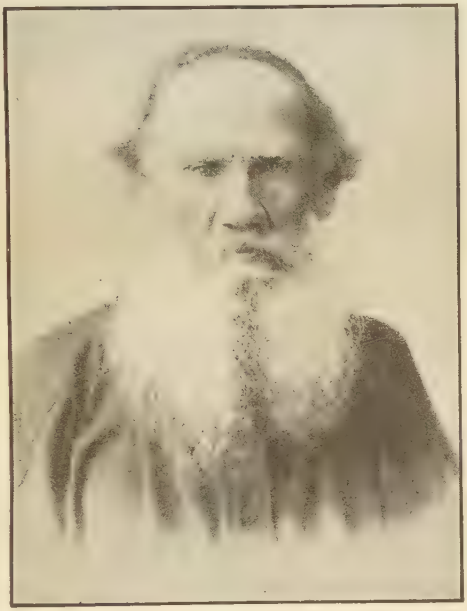
" 'The breeches— You know— It was I who took them—Astafi Ivanich—'

" 'Well,' I said, 'the great God will forgive you, Emelian, poor, unfortunate fellow that you are! Depart in peace.'

"And I had to turn away my head for a moment because grief for the poor devil took my breath away and the tears came in torrents from my eyes.

" 'Astafi Ivanich!—'

"I looked at him, saw that he wished to tell me something more, tried to raise himself, and was moving his lips— He reddened and looked at me— Suddenly I saw that he began to grow paler and paler; in a moment he fell with his head thrown back, breathed once, and gave his soul into God's keeping."



Tolstoi

THE LONG EXILE

BY COUNT LEO NIKOLAIEVITCH TOLSTOI

Count Tolstoi, the son of a Russian nobleman, was born in 1828, so he is to-day an old man. The greatest book that has come out of Russia is the tragic but intensely lifelike "Anna Karenina," published when Tolstoi was forty-seven years old. Much of his early work is extremely interesting and valuable, for artistic reasons, but his late years have been devoted almost entirely to moralizing and speculating. A consensus of opinion among students of Russian literature shows that they consider "The Long Exile" to be the author's best short story.

THE LONG EXILE

BY COUNT LEO TOLSTOI

"God sees the truth, but bides his time."

ONCE upon a time there lived in the city of Vladímir a young merchant named Aksénof. He had two shops and a house.

Aksénof himself had a ruddy complexion and curly hair; he was a very jolly fellow and a good singer. When he was young he used to drink too much, and when he was tipsy he was turbulent; but after his marriage he ceased drinking, and only occasionally had a spree.

One time in summer Aksénof was going to Nízhni[1] to the great Fair. As he was about to bid his family good-by, his wife said to him:

"Iván Dmítrievitch, do not go to-day; I had a dream, and dreamed that some misfortune befell you."

Aksénof laughed at her, and said: "You are always afraid that I shall go on a spree at the Fair."

His wife said: "I myself know not what I am afraid of, but I had such a strange dream: you seemed to be coming home from town, and you took off your hat, and I looked, and your head was all gray."

---

[1] Nízhni Nóvgorod: it means Lower New Town.

Translated by Nathan Haskell Dole. Copyright, 1888, by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

Aksénof laughed. "That means good luck. See, I am going now. I will bring you some rich remembrances."

And he bade his family farewell and set off.

When he had gone half his journey, he fell in with a merchant of his acquaintance, and the two stopped together at the same tavern for the night. They took tea together, and went to sleep in two adjoining rooms.

Aksénof did not care to sleep long; he awoke in the middle of the night, and in order that he might get a good start while it was cool he aroused his driver and bade him harness up, went down into the smoky hut, settled his account with the landlord, and started on his way.

After he had driven forty versts,[2] he again stopped to get something to eat; he rested in the vestibule of the inn, and when it was noon, he went to the doorstep and ordered the samovár[3] got ready; then he took out his guitar and began to play.

Suddenly a troïka[4] with a bell dashed up to the inn, and from the equipage leaped an official with two soldiers; he comes directly up to Aksénof and asks: "Who are you? Where did you come from?"

Aksénof answers without hesitation, and asks him if he would not have a glass of tea with him.

But the official keeps on with his questions: "Where

---

[2] Nearly twenty-six and a half miles.

[3] Water-boiler for making Russian tea.

[4] A team of three horses harnessed abreast: the outside two gallop; the shaft horse trots.

did you spend last night? Were you alone or with a merchant? Have you seen the merchant this morning? Why did you leave so early this morning?"

Aksénof wondered why he was questioned so closely; but he told everything just as it was, and he asks: "Why do you ask me so many questions? I am not a thief or a murderer. I am on my own business; there is nothing to question me about."

Then the official called up the soldiers, and said: "I am the police inspector, and I have made these inquiries of you because the merchant with whom you spent last night has been stabbed. Show me your things, and you men search him."

They went into the tavern, brought in the trunk and bag, and began to open and search them. Suddenly the police inspector pulled out from the bag a knife, and demanded: "Whose knife is this?"

Aksénof looked and saw a knife covered with blood taken from his bag, and he was frightened.

"And whose blood is that on the knife?"

Aksénof tried to answer, but he could not articulate his words:

"I—I—don't—know— I— That knife—it is—not mine—"

Then the police inspector said: "This morning the merchant was found stabbed to death in his bed. No one except you could have done it. The tavern was locked on the inside, and there was no one in the tavern except yourself. And here is the bloody knife in your bag, and your guilt is evident in your face. Tell me how you killed him and how much money you took

from him." Aksénof swore that he had not done it, that he had not seen the merchant after he had drunken tea with him, that the only money that he had with him—eight thousand rubles—was his own, and that the knife was not his.

But his voice trembled, his face was pale, and he was all quivering with fright, like a guilty person.

The police inspector called the soldiers, commanded them to bind Aksénof and take him to the wagon.

When they took him to the wagon with his feet tied, Aksénof crossed himself and burst into tears.

They confiscated Aksénof's possessions and his money, and took him to the next city and threw him into prison.

They sent to Vladimir to make inquiries about Aksénof's character, and all the merchants and citizens of Vladímir declared that Aksénof, when he was young, used to drink and was wild, but that now he was a worthy man. Then he was brought up for judgment. He was sentenced for having killed the merchant and for having robbed him of twenty thousand rubles.

Aksénof's wife was dumfounded by the event, and did not know what to think. Her children were still small, and there was one at the breast. She took them all with her and journeyed to the city where her husband was imprisoned.

At first they would not grant her admittance, but afterward she got permission from the chief, and was taken to her husband.

When she saw him in his prison garb, in chains together with murderers, she fell to the floor, and it

was a long time before she recovered from her swoon. Then she placed her children around her, sat down amid them, and began to tell him about their domestic affairs, and to ask him about everything that had happened to him.

He told her the whole story.

She asked: "What is to be the result of it?"

He said: "We must petition the Czar. It is impossible that an innocent man should be condemned."

The wife said that she had already sent in a petition to the Czar, but that the petition had not been granted. Aksénof said nothing, but was evidently very much downcast.

Then his wife said: "You see the dream that I had, when I dreamed that you had become gray-headed, meant something, after all. Already your hair has begun to turn gray with trouble. You ought to have stayed at home that time."

And she began to tear her hair, and she said: "Ványa,[5] my dearest husband, tell your wife the truth: Did you commit that crime or not?"

Aksénof said: "So you, too, have no faith in me!" And he wrung his hands and wept.

Then a soldier came and said that it was time for the wife and children to go. And Aksénof for the last time bade farewell to his family.

When his wife was gone, Aksénof began to think over all that they had said. When he remembered that his wife had also distrusted him, and had asked him if he had murdered the merchant, he said to

[5] Diminutive of Iván, John.

himself: "It is evident that no one but God can know the truth of the matter, and He is the only one to ask for mercy, and He is the only one from whom to expect it."

And from that time Aksénof ceased to send in petitions, ceased to hope, and only prayed to God. Aksénof was sentenced to be knouted, and then to exile with hard labor.

And so it was done.

He was flogged with the knout, and then, when the wounds from the knout were healed, he was sent with other exiles to Siberia.

Aksénof lived twenty-six years in the mines. The hair on his head had become white as snow, and his beard had grown long, thin, and gray. All his gaiety had vanished.

He was bent, his gait was slow, he spoke little, he never laughed, and he spent much of his time in prayer.

Aksénof had learned while in prison to make boots, and with the money that he earned he bought the "Book of Martyrs," [6] and used to read it when it was light enough in prison, and on holidays he would go to the prison church, read the Gospels, and sing in the choir, for his voice was still strong and good.

The authorities liked Aksénof for his submissiveness, and his prison associates respected him and called him "Grandfather" and the "man of God." Whenever they had petitions to be presented, Aksénof was

[6] Chetyá Minyéi.

always chosen to carry them to the authorities; and when quarrels arose among the prisoners, they always came to Aksénof as umpire.

Aksénof never received any letters from home, and he knew not whether his wife and children were alive.

One time some new convicts came to the prison. In the evening all the old convicts gathered around the newcomers, and began to ply them with questions as to the cities or villages from which this one or that had come, and what their crimes were.

At this time Aksénof was sitting on his bunk, near the strangers, and, with bowed head, was listening to what was said.

One of the new convicts was a tall, healthy looking old man of sixty years, with a close-cropped gray beard. He was telling why he had been arrested. He said:

"And so, brothers, I was sent here for nothing. I unharnessed a horse from a postboy's sledge, and they caught me in it, and insisted that I was stealing it. 'But,' says I, 'I only wanted to go a little faster, so I whipped up the horse. And besides, the driver was a friend of mine. It's all right,' says I. 'No,' say they; 'you were stealing it.' But they did not know what and where I had stolen. I have done things which long ago would have sent me here, but I was not found out; and now they have sent me here without any justice in it. But what's the use of grumbling? I have been in Siberia before. They did not keep me here very long though—"

"Where did you come from?" asked one of the convicts.

"Well, we came from the city of Vladímir; we are citizens of that place. My name is Makár, and my father's name was Semyón."

Aksénof raised his head and asked:

"Tell me, Semyónitch,[7] have you ever heard of the Aksénofs, merchants in Vladímir city? Are they alive?"

"Indeed, I have heard of them! They are rich merchants, though their father is in Siberia. It seems he was just like any of the rest of us sinners. And now tell me, Grandfather, what you were sent here for?"

Aksénof did not like to speak of his misfortune; he sighed, and said:

"Twenty-six years ago I was condemned to hard labor on account of my sins."

Makár Semyónof said:

"But what was your crime?"

Aksénof replied: "I must, therefore, have deserved this."

But he would not tell or give any further particulars; the other convicts, however, related why Aksénof had been sent to Siberia. They told how on the road some one had killed a merchant, and put the knife into Aksénof's luggage, and how he had been unjustly punished for this.

When Makár heard this, he glanced at Aksénof, clasped his hands round his knees, and said:

[7] Son of Semyón.

"Well, now, that's wonderful! You have been growing old, Grandfather!"

They began to ask him what he thought was wonderful, and where he had seen Aksénof. But Makár did not answer; he only repeated:

"A miracle, boys! how wonderful that we should meet again!"

And when he said these words, it came over Aksénof that perhaps this man might know who it was that had killed the merchant. And he said:

"Did you ever hear of that crime, Semyónitch, or did you ever see me before?"

"Of course I heard of it! The country was full of it. But it happened a long time ago. And I have forgotten what I heard," said Makár.

"Perhaps you heard who killed the merchant?" asked Aksénof.

Makár laughed, and said:

"Why, of course the man who had the knife in his bag killed him. If any one put the knife in your things and was not caught doing it—it would have been impossible. For how could they have put the knife in your bag? Was it not standing close by your head? And you would have heard it, wouldn't you?"

As soon as Aksénof heard these words he felt convinced that this was the very man who had killed the merchant.

He stood up and walked away. All that night he was unable to sleep. Deep melancholy came upon him, and he began to call back the past in his imagination.

He imagined his wife as she had been when for the

last time she had come to see him in the prison. She seemed to stand before him exactly as though she were alive, and he saw her face and her eyes, and he seemed to hear her words and her laugh.

Then his imagination brought up his children before him; one a little boy in a little fur coat, and the other on his mother's breast.

And he imagined himself as he was at that time, young and happy. He remembered how he had sat on the steps of the tavern when they arrested him, and how his soul was full of joy as he played on his guitar.

And he remembered the place of execution where they had knouted him, and the knoutsman, and the people standing around, and the chains and the convicts, and all his twenty-six years of prison life, and he remembered his old age. And such melancholy came upon Aksénof that he was tempted to put an end to himself.

"And all on account of this criminal!" said Aksénof to himself.

And then he began to feel such anger against Makár Semyónof that he almost fell upon him, and was crazy with desire to pay off the load of vengeance. He repeated prayers all night, but could not recover his calm. When day came he walked by Makár and did not look at him.

Thus passed two weeks. Aksénof was not able to sleep, and such melancholy had come over him that he did not know what to do.

One time during the night, as he happened to be passing through the prison, he saw that the soil was

disturbed under one of the bunks. He stopped to examine it. Suddenly Makár crept from under the bunk and looked at Aksénof with a startled face.

Aksénof was about to pass on so as not to see him, but Makár seized his arm, and told him how he had been digging a passage under the wall, and how every day he carried the dirt out in his boot-legs and emptied it in the street when they went out to work. He said:

"If you only keep quiet, old man, I will get you out too. But if you tell on me, they will flog me; but afterward I will make it hot for you. I will kill you."

When Aksénof saw his enemy, he trembled all over with rage, twitched away his arm, and said: "I have no reason to make my escape, and to kill me would do no harm; you killed me long ago. But as to telling on you or not, I shall do as God sees fit to have me."

On the next day, when they took the convicts out to work, the soldiers discovered where Makár had been digging in the ground; they began to make a search, and found the hole. The chief came into the prison and asked every one, "Who was digging that hole?"

All denied it. Those who knew did not name Makár, because they were aware that he would be flogged half to death for such an attempt.

Then the chief came to Aksénof. He knew that Aksénof was a truthful man, and he said: "Old man, you are truthful; tell me before God who did this."

Makár was standing near, in great excitement, and did not dare to look at Aksénof.

Aksénof's hands and lips trembled, and it was some time before he could speak a word. He said to himself: "If I shield him— But why should I forgive him when he has been my ruin? Let him suffer for my sufferings! But shall I tell on him? They will surely flog him? But what difference does it make what I think of him? Will it be any the easier for me?"

Once more the chief demanded:

"Well, old man, tell the truth! Who dug the hole?"

Aksénof glanced at Makár, and then said:

"I can not tell, your Honor. God does not bid me tell. I will not tell. Do with me as you please; I am in your power."

In spite of all the chief's efforts, Aksénof would say nothing more. And so they failed to find out who dug the hole.

On the next night as Aksénof was lying on his bunk, and almost asleep, he heard some one come along and sit down at his feet.

He peered through the darkness and saw that it was Makár.

Aksénof asked:

"What do you wish of me? What are you doing here?"

Makár remained silent. Aksénof arose, and said:

"What do you want? Go away, or else I will call the guard."

Makár went up close to Aksénof, and said in a whisper:

"Iván Dmítritch,[8] forgive me!"

Aksénof said: "What have I to forgive you?"

"It was I who killed the merchant and put the knife in your bag. And I was going to kill you too, but there was a noise in the yard; I thrust the knife in your bag, and slipped out of the window."

Aksénof said nothing, and he did not know what to say. Makár got down from the bunk, knelt on the ground, and said:

"Iván Dmítritch, forgive me, forgive me for Christ's sake. I will confess that I killed the merchant—they will pardon you. You will be able to go home."

Aksénof said:

"It is easy for you to say that, but how could I endure it? Where should I go now? My wife is dead! my children have forgotten me. I have nowhere to go."

Makár did not rise; he beat his head on the ground, and said:

"Iván Dmítritch, forgive me! When they flogged me with the knout, it was easier to bear than it is now to look at you. And you had pity on me after all this—you did not tell on me. Forgive me for Christ's sake! Forgive me though I am a cursed villain!"

And the man began to sob.

When Aksénof heard Makár Semyónof sobbing, he himself burst into tears, and said:

[8] Son of Dmitry (or Dmítrievitch; see page 137).

"God will forgive you; maybe I am a hundred times worse than you are!"

And suddenly he felt a wonderful peace in his soul. And he ceased to mourn for his home, and had no desire to leave the prison, but only thought of his last hour.

Makár would not listen to Aksénof, and confessed his crime.

When they came to let Aksénof go home, he was dead.

EASTER NIGHT

BY VLADIMIR GALAKTIONOVITCH KOROLÉNKO

Twenty-five years separate Korolénko from Tolstoi, and a new and more modern point of view becomes apparent in the work of the younger man. "Easter Night" is distinguished from its predecessors in this volume by a romantic note of imaginative dramatic interest that shows the developed artistic temperament of the author.

Korolénko was born in 1853, made his literary début in 1879, and with "The Blind Musician," in 1886, rose to the front rank among the younger generation of writers. It is the story of the life of a boy who has been blind from birth who becomes a musician under the tender care of his father and mother.

EASTER NIGHT

BY VLADIMIR KOROLÉNKO

IT was Holy Saturday in 188–.

Evening had long since enfolded the silent earth. The ground, warmed during the day by the rays of the sun, was now cooling beneath the invigorating influence of the night-frost. It seemed like one sighing, while its breath, forming a silvery mist, rose glistening in the rays of the starlit sky, like clouds of incense, to greet the approaching holiday.

All was still. In the cool night-breeze the small provincial town of N—— stood silent, waiting to hear the first stroke of the bell from the high cathedral tower. But the town was not sleeping; a spirit of expectancy brooded beneath the veil of darkness, breathing through the shadows of the silent and deserted streets. Now and then a belated workman, who had but just escaped from his servile task ere the holiday began, passed, hurrying on his way; once in a while a droshky rattled by, leaving silence behind it. Life had fled indoors and hidden itself, in palace and hovel, from whose windows the lights shone far out upon the street, while over the city and the fields hovered the spirit of Resurrection.

Although the moon stood high above the horizon, the town still rested in the broad, deep shadow of a

Translated by Mrs. Aline Delano. Copyright, 1887, by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

hill, crowned by a gloomy and massive edifice, whose peculiarly straight and severe outlines were sharply defined in the golden ether. The sombre gates were hardly to be distinguished amid the gloom of its deeply shadowed walls, while the towers on the four corners stood out boldly against the azure sky, and gradually over all the moon poured its flood of liquid gold.

Suddenly on the sensitive air of the expectant night came the first stroke from the high cathedral belfry; then another, and still another. A minute later and the whole air throbbed and swelled, as the countless bells rang out, uniting in one harmonious peal. From the gloomy building overshadowing the town there came a faint, broken harmony, that seemed to flutter helplessly in the air, and thence to rise into the ethereal light, and join the mighty chord. The singing ceased, the sounds dissolved in air, and the silence of the night gradually resumed its sway; a faint echo seemed to hover for a while, like the vibration of an invisible harp-string. Now the fires were gradually extinguished, the church windows shone forth brightly, and the earth seemed ready to proclaim once more the old tidings of peace, love, and good-will.

The bolts of the dark gates in the gloomy building creaked, and a band of soldiers, with clanking arms, sallied forth to relieve the night sentinels; on approaching the corners, they would halt, and a dark form, with measured steps, would detach itself from the rest, while the former sentinel took his place in the ranks, and the soldiers went on their way, skirting the high prison wall, that glistened in the moonbeams.

As they reached its western side, a young recruit stepped forward from the ranks to relieve the sentry who was posted there; a rustic awkwardness still showed itself in his movements, and his young face betrayed the absorbed attention of a novice who was to occupy for the first time a responsible post. He faced the wall, presented arms, made two steps forward, and, shouldering his musket, stood beside the sentry he was to replace. The latter, turning slightly toward him, repeated the usual formula, in the sing-song tone of discipline.

"From corner to corner— Look out! Do not sleep or doze!" He spoke rapidly, while the recruit listened with close attention, and a peculiar expression of anxiety and sadness in his gray eyes.

"You understand?" asked his superior.

"Yes, sir!"

"Then, look out!" he added, sharply; but, suddenly changing his tone, he said, good-naturedly:

"Don't be afraid, Faddeyef; you are not a woman! I hope you are not afraid of the Lyeshy!"

"Why should I be afraid of him?" replied Faddeyef. Then he added: "But I tell you, my good fellows, I have a misgiving."

This simple and almost childish confession made the soldiers laugh.

"There's simplicity for you!" exclaimed the leader, in tones of contempt. Then giving the order, "Shoulder arms! March!" the sentries, with measured tread, disappeared around the corner, and the sound of their footsteps was soon lost in the distance. The sentinel

shouldered his musket, and began to pace along the wall.

Inside the prison, at the first stroke of the bell, all was in motion. It was long since the sad and gloomy prison night had witnessed so much life. It seemed as if the church bells had really brought tidings of liberty; for the grimy doors of the cells opened in turn, and their occupants, clad in long gray garments, the fatal patches on their backs, filed in rows along the corridors, on their way to the brilliantly lighted prison church. They came from all directions—from right and left, descending and ascending the stairway —and amid the echoing footsteps rang the sound of arms and the clanking of chains. On entering the church, this gray mass of humanity poured into the space allotted to them, behind the railing, and stood there in silence. The windows of the church were protected by strong iron bars.

The prison was empty, except in the four towers, where, in small, strongly bolted cells, four men, in solitary confinement, were restlessly pacing to and fro, stopping once in a while to listen at the keyhole to the snatches of church singing that reached their ears.

And, beside these, in one of the ordinary cells, in a bunk, lay a sick man. The overseer, to whom this sudden illness had been reported, went into his cell as they were escorting the prisoners to church, and, leaning over him, looked into his eyes, that were gazing fixedly before him, and in which shone a peculiar light.

"Ivanof! Ivanof!" he called out to the invalid.

The convict never turned his head, but continued muttering something unintelligible, moving his parched lips with difficulty.

"Carry him to the hospital to-morrow!" said the overseer, as he left the cell, appointing a sentry to guard the door. The latter, after a close examination of the delirious patient, shook his head, saying as he did so: "A vagrant! Poor fellow! you are not likely to tramp any more!" The overseer continued his way along the corridor, and entered the church, taking up his post by the door, where, with frequent genuflections, he listened devoutly to the service. Meanwhile the mutterings of the unconscious man filled the empty cell.

He did not seem old; on the contrary, he looked strong and muscular. He was delirious, apparently reliving his recent past, while a look of distress disfigured his face. Fate had played him a sorry trick. He had tramped thousands of versts through the Siberian forests and mountains, had suffered countless dangers and privations, always urged onward by a consuming homesickness, and sustained by one hope —that he might live to see his native place, and be once more with his own people, if it were but for a month, or even a week. Then he would be resigned, even if he had to go back again. But it chanced that when only a few hundred versts from his native village he had been recaptured, and confined in this prison. Suddenly his mutterings ceased. His eyes dilated, and his breathing became more even— Brighter dreams flitted across his fevered brain— The

forest soughs— He knows it well, that soughing; monotonous, musical, and powerful— He can distinguish its various tones; the language of each tree: the majestic pine, dusky green, rustling high overhead —the whispering cedars—the bright, merry birch, tossing its flexible branches—the trembling aspen, fluttering its timid, sensitive leaves— The free birds sing; the stream rushes across the stony chasm; and a swarm of gibbering magpies, detectives of the forest, are soaring in the air over the path followed by the vagrant through this almost impenetrable thicket.

It seemed as if a breeze from the free forest were wafted through the prison cell. The invalid sat up and drew a long breath, gazing intently before him, while a sudden gleam of consciousness flashed into his eyes— The vagrant, the habitual fugitive, beheld before him an unaccustomed sight—an open door!

In his frame, enfeebled by disease, a powerful instinct sprang to life. His delirium either disappeared, or centred itself on one idea, which, like a ray of sunlight, illumined the chaos of his thoughts. Alone! and with an open door! In a moment he was on his feet. It seemed as if the fever had left his brain, and was only perceptible in his eyes, which had a fixed and menacing expression.

Some one had just come out from the church, leaving the door ajar.

The strains of the harmonious singing, subdued by the distance, reached the ear of the vagrant, and then died away. His face softened, his eyes grew dim, and his imagination reproduced a long cherished scene:

A mild night, the whisper of the pines, their branches swaying above the old church of his native village—a throng of countrymen; the lights reflected in the river, and this same chant— He must make haste with his journey, that he may hear this at home, with his family!

All this time, in the corridor, near the church door, the overseer prayed devoutly, kneeling, and touching his forehead to the ground.

Meanwhile, the young recruit paced to and fro on his beat along the prison wall, which glowed with a phosphorescent light. A broad, level field, recently freed from snow, lay before him.

A light wind rustled through the tall grass, inclining him to a sad and pensive mood.

The moon hung high above the horizon; the expression of anxiety had vanished from Faddeyef's face. He stopped by the wall, and, setting his musket on the ground, rested his hand on the muzzle, on which he leaned his head, falling into a deep reverie. He could not yet wholly grasp the idea of his presence in this place, on this solemn Easter night, beside the wall, with a musket in his hand, and opposite the vacant field. He had by no means ceased to be a peasant; many things clear to a soldier were to him incomprehensible; and he was often teased by being called "a rustic." But a short time ago he was a free man, had the care of a household, owned a field, and was at liberty to labor when and where he pleased. Now, an indefinite, inexplicable fear beset his every step and movement, forcing the awkward young rustic into the

groove of strict discipline. At this moment he was alone—the bleak landscape before him, and the wind, whistling through the dry grass, made him dreamy; and memories of familiar scenes passed through his mind. He seemed to see his native village! The same moon shone above it, the same breeze blew over it; he saw the lighted church, and the dark pines tossing their green heads—

Suddenly he became conscious of his present surroundings, and surprise kindled his blue eyes, as though he were questioning, "What are these? this field, this wall, and musket?" For an instant he realized where he was, but in another moment the whistling breeze wafted him back to familiar scenes; and again the soldier dreamt, leaning on his musket.

All at once, close beside him, appeared a head over the top of the wall—the eyes glimmering like two coals. The vagrant peered into the open field, and beyond it to the shadowy line of the distant forest—his chest expanded as he greedily inhaled the refreshing breath of "mother night." He let himself down by his hands, gently gliding along the wall.

The joyful ringing had awakened the slumbering night. The door of the prison church was opened, and the procession moved into the yard. In waves of melody the singing poured forth from the church. The soldier started, lifted his cap, and was about to make the sign of the cross, when he suddenly stopped, with his hand raised in the act of prayer, while the vagrant, having reached the ground, swiftly started on a run toward the tall grass.

"Stop, pray, stop, my dearest fellow!" exclaimed the soldier, in a terrified voice, as he raised his musket. At the sight of this gray figure fleeing from pursuit, all his shapeless and terrible fears took a definite form. "Duty—responsibility!" flashed across his mind, and, raising his musket, he aimed at the fugitive. But before pulling the trigger he pitifully shut his eyes.

Meanwhile, above the town there rose, hovering in the ether, a harmonious and prolonged chime, marred only by the prison bell, that trembled and fluttered like a wounded bird; and from beyond the wall the sounds of the joyous chant, "Christ is risen," reached far into the field. Suddenly, above all other sounds, came the report of a musket, followed by a faint, helpless groan, like a plaintive and dying protest. Then for a moment all was still; and only the distant echoes of the vacant field repeated with a sad murmur the last reverberation of the shot amid the silence of the terror-stricken night.

THE SIGNAL

BY VSEVOLOD MIKAILOVITCH GARSHIN

Garshin, who may be said, for purposes of comparison, to belong to the school of Dostoievski, was all his life subject to attacks of melancholia. Despite the careful nursing of his wife, who was a physician, he threw himself over the stairs of his house in St. Petersburg in 1888, and died from the effects. His first important story, "Four Days," appeared in 1876, and was the outcome of his experiences in the Servian and Turkish Wars. It is a powerful but gruesome Verestchagin-like study of the horrors of war, and reminds one of Stephen Crane's "Red Badge of Courage." In 1883 he was appointed Secretary to the Congress of Russian Railroads, and it was probably at that time that he gained the experience which led to the writing of "The Signal."

THE SIGNAL

BY VSEVOLOD GARSHIN

SEMEN IVANOV served as trackman on the railroad. His watch-house was twelve versts (nearly eight miles) distant from one station and ten from the other. The year before a large weaving mill had been established about four versts away; and its tall chimneys looked black from behind the trees of the wood; and nearer than this, apart from the other watch-houses, there was no human habitation.

Semen Ivanov was a sickly, broken-down man. Nine years before he had gone to the war: he served as orderly to an officer and had remained with him during the whole campaign. He starved and froze, and baked in the hot sun, and marched from forty to fifty versts in the frost or in the burning heat. It also happened that he was often under fire, but, thank God, no bullet ever touched him.

Once his regiment was in the first line; for a whole week the firing was kept up constantly on both sides: the Russian line on this side of the hollow and the Turkish lines just across, and from morning till night the firing was going on. Semen's officer was also in the front lines, and three times a day, from the regiment kitchens in the hollow, Semen carried the hot samovar and the food. Semen walked through

Translated by Lizzie B. Gorin. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

the open space while the bullets whistled over his head and cracked the stones. Semen was afraid, but he went on—wept, and went on. The officers were very much satisfied with Semen's services: the officers always had their hot tea.

Semen returned from the war without a wound, but with a rheumatic pain in his legs and arms. And he had suffered a good deal of sorrow since that time. His old father died soon after his return, then his little son—a boy of four—also died from some throat trouble; and Semen was left alone in the world with his wife.

Their work on the little piece of land allotted to them also proved unsuccessful, it being too hard for a man to till the soil with swollen arms and legs. And so they could not get along in their native village, and decided to go into new places in search of better luck. Semen lived with his wife on the Done for some time, and in the Government of Cherson; but they somehow could not get along very well anywhere. At last his wife went into service, and Semen continued his roving life as heretofore.

Once he happened to go by rail, and on one station he noticed the station-master, who seemed rather familiar to him. Semen looked at him intently, and the station-master also peered into Semen's face. They recognized each other: it was an officer of his regiment. "Is it you, Ivanov?" said the man.

"Yes, your honor, my very self."

"How did you get here?" And so Semen told him: such and such were the circumstances.

"Well, where are you going now?"

"I can not say, your honor."

"How is that, you fool, you can not say?"

"Just so, your honor, because I have nowhere to go to. I must look for some kind of employment, your honor."

And the station-master looked at him for a moment and fell to thinking, then he said to him: "Well, brother, stay here on the station in the mean time. But it seems to me that you are a married man? Where is your wife?"

"Yes, sir, I am married; my wife is serving at the house of a merchant at Kursk."

"Well, then, write to your wife to come here. I shall get a free ticket for her. We will soon have a vacant watch-house here, and I will ask the division-master to give you the place."

"Many thanks, your honor," replied Semen.

And so he remained on the station, helping in the station-master's kitchen, cutting wood, sweeping the courtyard and the railway platform. In two weeks his wife arrived, and Semen went on a hand-car to his new home.

The watch-house was new and warm, wood he had in plenty, the former watchman left a small garden, and there was a little less than one and a half acres of arable land on the two sides of the railroad-bed. Semen was overjoyed: he began to dream of a little homestead of his own, and of buying a horse and a cow.

He was given all the necessary supplies: a green

flag, a red flag, lanterns, a signal-pipe, a hammer, a rail-key for tightening the screw-nuts, a crowbar, shovel, brooms, clinch-nails, bolts, and two books with the rules and regulations of the railroad. At first Semen did not sleep at night, for he continually repeated the regulations. If the train was due in two hours, he had already gone his rounds, and would sit on the little bench at the watch-house and look and listen: were not the rails trembling, was there no noise of an approaching train?

At last he learned by heart all the rules; though he read with difficulty and had to spell out each word, nevertheless he did learn them by heart.

This happened in summer: the work was not hard, there was no snow to shovel, and, besides, the trains passed but rarely on that road. Semen would walk over his verst twice in twenty-four hours, would tighten a screw here and there, pick up a splinter, examine the water-pipes, and go home to take care of his little homestead. The only thing that bothered him and his wife was: no matter what they made up their minds to do, they had to ask the permission of the track-master, who again had to lay the matter before the division-master, and when permission was at last given the time had already passed, and it was then too late to be of any use to them. On account of this, Semen and his wife began, at times, to feel very lonely.

About two months passed in this way; Semen began to form acquaintance with his nearest neighbors —trackmen like himself. One was already a very old

man, whom the railway authorities had long intended to replace; he could hardly move from his watch-house, and his wife attended to his duties. The other trackman, who lived nearer to the station, was still a young man, thin and sinewy. Semen met him for the first time on the railroad-bed half-way between their watch-houses, while they were making their rounds; Semen took off his cap and bowed. "Good health to you, neighbor," he said.

The neighbor looked at him askance. "How are you?" he replied, turned, and went his way.

The women also met afterward. Arina, Semen's wife, greeted her neighbor affably, but this neighbor, also not of the talkative kind, spoke a few words and walked away. On meeting her once, Semen asked: "Why is your husband so uncommunicative, young woman?" After standing for some time in silence, she said: "But what should he talk to you about? Everybody has his troubles—God speed you."

But after another month had passed, their intimacy grew. Now, when Semen and Vasili met on the road-bed, they sat down on the edge, smoked their pipes, and told each other of their past life and experiences. Vasili spoke but little, but Semen told of his campaign life and of his native village.

"I have seen plenty of sorrow in my time, and God knows I am not so very old either. God has not given us much luck. It just depends: the kind of a lot the dear Lord portions out to one—such he must have. This is the way I make it out, Vasili Stepanich, little brother."

And Vasili struck the bowl of his pipe on the rail to empty it, and said:

"It isn't luck nor fate which is eating your life and mine away, but people. There is not a beast more cruel and rapacious than man. A wolf does not devour a wolf—but man eats man alive."

"Well, brother, wolf does eat wolf—that is where you are wrong."

"It came to my tongue, so I said it; anyhow there is not a more cruel beast. If it were not for man's viciousness and greed—'twould be possible to live. Every one is on the lookout to grasp at your vitals, tear off a piece, and gobble it up."

"I don't know, brother," said Semen after thinking a bit. "Maybe it is so—but if it is really so, then the great God ordained it in this way."

"And if it is so," spoke Vasili, "then there is no use of my speaking to you. A man who attributes to God every kind of iniquity, and himself sits and patiently bears it, can not be a man, brother mine—but an animal. Here you have my whole say!"

And he turned and went off without even saying good-by. Semen rose also and called after him; "Neighbor, and what are you abusing me for?"

But the neighbor did not even turn around, and went his way.

Semen looked after him till he was lost from sight at the turn of the road, then he returned home and said to his wife: "Well, Arina, what a venomous man that neighbor of ours is!"

Nevertheless they were not angry with each other;

and when they met again they spoke as if nothing had happened and on the very same topic.

"Ei, brother, if not for the people—we would not sit here in these watch-houses," spoke Vasili.

"Well, what if we do live in a watch-house? It is not so bad to live in one, after all."

"Not so bad to live, not so bad— Ech, you! You lived long, but gained little; looked at much, but saw little. A poor man, no matter where he lives, in a railway watch-house or in any other place, what sort of a life is his? Those fleecers are eating your life away, squeeze all your juice out, and when you have grown old they throw you out like some swill, for the pigs to feed on. How much wages do you get?"

"Well, not much, Vasili Stepanich, twelve rubles" (about seven dollars and a half).

"And I thirteen and a half. Allow me to ask you why! According to the rulings of the administration, every one of us is supposed to get the same amount —fifteen rubles a month, and light and heat. Who was it that allotted you and me twelve, or say, thirteen and a half rubles? Allow me to ask you?— And you say it is not so bad a life? Understand me well, it is not about the three or one and a half rubles I am wrangling about—but even if they paid me the whole amount— Last month I was at the station when the director happened to pass. I saw him there. Had the honor. He occupied a whole private car by himself—on the station he alighted and stood on the platform, looking—no, I will not stay here long; I shall go where my eyes will lead me."

"But where will you go, Stepanich? Let well alone, you will not find it much better anywhere. You have a home here, warmth, and a bit of land. Your wife is an able workwoman—"

"Land! You ought to see the land I have—why, there isn't a stick on it. This spring I planted some cabbages. Well, one day the track-master passed: 'What is this?' he says. 'Why did you not report it? Why not have waited for permission? Dig it out at once and not a vestige should be left of it.' He was in his cups. At another time he would not have said a word, and here he got it into his head— 'Three rubles fine!—"

For some moments Vasili pulled at his pipe in silence, then he said in a low voice: "It wanted but little more, and I would have made short work of him."

"Well, neighbor, you are a hot-head, I can tell you."

"I am not hot, I am only speaking and considering everything from the point of justice. But he will get it from me yet, the red-mug; I shall make a complaint to the master of the division in person. We shall see!"

And he really complained.

Once the master of the division came to make a preliminary inspection of the road. In three days' time very important gentlemen were expected from St. Petersburg to make an inspection of the road: everything had to be made ship-shape; some new gravel was ordered before their arrival, added, leveled, and smoothed out, the sleepers were examined,

the nuts tightened, the verst-posts newly painted, and the order was given that some fine yellow sand be strewn over the crossings. A track-woman even drove her old man out of the nearest watch-house, which he almost never left, in order to trim a little the tiny grass-plot. Semen worked a whole week to bring everything into first-rate order, even mended his coat and burnished his brass shield till it shone. Vasili also worked hard.

At last the division master arrived in a buzzing draisine (hand car), worked by four men and making twenty versts an hour. It came flying toward Semen's watch-house, and Semen sprang forward and reported in military fashion. Everything appeared to be correct.

"Are you long here?" asked the master.

"Since the second of May, your honor."

"Very well, thank you. And who is at Number 164?"

The track-master who rode with him on the draisine replied: "Vasili Spiridov."

"Spiridov, Spiridov— Oh, the one you reported?"

"The very same."

"Very well, let us have a look at Vasili Spiridov. Go ahead."

The workmen leaned upon the handles and the draisine flew farther. "There will be a fight between them and the neighbor," thought Semen, looking after the disappearing draisine.

About two hours later Semen went on his rounds. He saw that some one was coming toward him, walk-

ing over the railroad bed, and there was something white visible on his head. Semen strained his eyes to see who it was—Vasili; in his hand he carried a stick and a small bundle was slung across his shoulders, and one cheek was tied up with a white kerchief.

"Where are you going, neighbor?" Semen shouted to him.

When Vasili approached him closer, Semen saw that he was as pale as chalk and wild-eyed; and when he started to speak his voice broke.

"I am off to the city," he said, "to Moscow—to the main office of the administration."

"To the administration— Is that it! You are going to make a complaint, are you? Better not, Vasili Stepanich, forget it—"

"No, brother, I will not forget it. It is too late to forget. You see, he struck me in the face, beat me till the blood flowed. As long as I live, I will not forget it, nor let it go at this."

"Give it up, Stepanich," Semen spoke to him, taking hold of his hand. "I speak truth: you will not make things better."

"Who speaks of better! I know myself that I will not make them better; you spoke truly about fate—you did. I shall not do much good to myself, but one has to stand up for justice."

"But won't you tell me how it all came about?"

"How it all came about— Well, he inspected everything, left the draisine on purpose to do so—even looked inside the watch-house. I knew beforehand that he would be strict—so I had everything in first-

class order. He was already going to leave when I came forward with my complaint. He immediately burst forth: 'Here,' he said, 'is to be a government inspection, you—so and so—and you dare come forward with your complaints about your vegetable garden! We are expecting privy councilors and he comes with his cabbages!' I could not control myself and said a word—not so very bad either, but it seemed to offend him and he struck me— And I stood there, as if it was the most usual thing in the world to happen. Only, when they went off, I came to my senses, washed off the blood from my face and went away."

"And what about the watch-house?"

"My wife is there, she will take care; and besides, the devil take their road, anyway!"

"Good-by, Ivanich," he said to Semen on taking leave of him; "I don't know if I shall find justice for myself."

"You don't mean to tell me that you will go on foot?"

"I shall ask them at the station to let me ride in a freighter; to-morrow I shall be in Moscow."

The neighbors took leave of each other and each went his way. Vasili stayed away for a long time. His wife did all the work for him, sleeping neither night nor day, and looked very worn and exhausted. On the third day the inspectors passed: an engine, freight-car, and two private cars, and Vasili was still absent. On the fourth day Semen saw Vasili's wife; her face was swollen with incessant weeping and her eyes were very red. "Has your husband returned?"

he asked her. She only waved her arm, but did not utter a word.

. . . . . .

When still a little boy Semen had learned how to make willow pipes. He burnt out the pith, drilled out where necessary the tiny finger-holes, and finished up the end of the pipe so artistically that almost anything could be played on it. At odd moments he now made lots of such pipes and sent them with an acquaintance of his, a freight conductor, to the city, where they were sold at two copecks[1] a pipe. On the third day after the inspection he left his wife at home to meet the six o'clock train, took his knife and went into the woods to cut his willow sticks. He came to the end of his section, where the road made a sharp turn, descended the embankment and went up the hill. About a half verst farther was a large bog, around which grew splendid shrubs for his pipes. He cut a whole heap of sticks and went home, again walking through the wood. The sun was already low; and a deathlike quiet reigned all about, only the chirping of the birds could be heard and the crackling underfoot of the wind-fallen wood. A little more and he would reach the railroad bed; suddenly it seemed to him as if he heard coming from somewhere the clang of iron striking on iron. Semen hurried his steps. "What can it be?" he asked himself, knowing that no repairs were going on in that section at that time. He reached the edge of the wood—before him rose high the em-

[1] A copeck is a little more than half a cent. 100 copecks make a silver ruble, or 60 cents.

bankment of the railway; and he saw on the top—on the railroad bed—a man squatting down at work on something. Semen began to ascend the embankment very quietly, thinking that some one was trying to steal the screw-nuts. He saw the man rise; in his hand he held a crowbar; he quickly shoved the crowbar under the rail and gave it a push to one side—Semen felt everything grow dim; he tried to shout, but could not. He saw that it was Vasili, and made a dash for the embankment, but Vasili was already rolling down the other side of the embankment with the rail-key and crowbar.

"Vasili Stepanich! Little father, friend, come back! Give me the crowbar! Let us put the rail in place; no one will ever know. Come back, save your soul from a great sin!"

But Vasili did not even turn round, and went on into the woods.

Semen remained standing over the dislocated rail, his sticks lying in a heap at his feet. The train which was due was not a freighter, but a passenger train, and he had nothing to stop it with: a flag he had none. He could not put the rail into its right place; with bare hands one can not fasten in the rail spikes. He had to run, run for dear life into his watch-house for the necessary implements! God give him strength!

And Semen started to run breathlessly toward his watch-house. He ran—now, now he would fall—at last he left the wood behind, he had only about seven hundred feet left to his watch-house—suddenly he heard the factory whistle. Six o'clock, and at two

minutes past six the train would pass. Great God! Save the innocent souls! And before his eyes he seemed to see how the left wheel of the engine would strike the cut rail, quiver, slant to one side, and tear the sleepers, knock them all to slivers, and just here—is the rounded curve, and the embankment—and the engine, the cars, all—would go pell-mell down, down from the height of seventy-seven feet, and the third-class cars were jammed full of people, little children among them. Now they were sitting tranquilly, not thinking of anything. O Lord, teach him what to do! No, he would not be able to get to the watch-house and return in time.

Semen gave up his intention of running to the watch-house, turned and ran back quicker than he had come, his head in a whirl; not knowing himself what would happen he ran up to the cut rail: his sticks lay scattered all around. He bent down and took one of the sticks, not understanding himself why he did it; and ran farther. And it seemed to him that the train was already approaching. He heard a far-away whistle, heard the rails begin to quiver measuredly and quietly: he had no more strength left to run. He stopped about seven hundred feet from the fatal spot: suddenly he became illuminated, as it were, by a thought.

He took off his hat, took from it a handkerchief; took out his knife from his boot-leg and crossed himself. God's blessing!

He slashed his left arm a little above the elbow with his sharp knife; the blood spurted down in a hot

stream; he dipped his handkerchief in it, smoothed it out, tied it to his stick, and displayed his red flag.

He stood waving the flag; the train was already in sight. The engineer did not see him, he would come nearer, but at a distance of seven hundred feet he would not be able to stop the heavy train!

And the blood was pouring and pouring— Semen pressed his hand to his side, but the blood would not stop; evidently he had made too deep a cut into the arm; his head was beginning to turn; he was getting dizzy, as if black flies were swimming in his eyes; then everything became altogether dark, and loud bells were ringing in his ears— He no longer saw the train, no longer heard the noise: only one thought predominated: "I will not be able to keep on my feet, will fall down, drop the flag; the train will pass over me?— Dear God, succor, send some one to relieve me—" His soul became a void, and he dropped the flag. But the bloody flag did not fall to the ground: some one's hand caught it and raised it aloft in front of the oncoming train. The engineer saw him and brought the engine to a stop.

. . . . . .

The people came rushing from the train; soon they gathered into a crowd; before them lay a man, unconscious, covered with blood; another man stood beside him with a bloody rag tied to a stick.

Vasili surveyed the crowd and lowered his head.

"Bind me," he said; "it was I who cut the rail."

THE CURSE OF FAME

BY IGNATIY NIKOLAIEVITCH POTAPENKO

Potapenko was born in 1856 and received a university education at Odessa and at St. Petersburg. In 1881 he made his first mark as an author with a series of short stories and sketches. Since then he has contributed to Russian literature many romances, novels, tales and plays. Like the Belgian dramatist, Maeterlinck, he seems to select a few insistent notes with masterly judgment, and then strikes these over and over again until the overtones are heard and produce of themselves the full effect of harmony.

The general opinion among critics of Russian literature is that Potapenko, though ranking by no means with the first of Russian writers, has reached in this single instance of "The Curse of Fame" a high-water mark equal to the best.

THE CURSE OF FAME

BY IGNATIY POTAPENKO

THE small Hall of the Conservatory of Music was but half illuminated. Along the walls only alternate sconces were lighted, and only those jets of the great chandelier nearest the platform were burning. On this particular evening—a private "Students' Recital"—none but fellow pupils and near relatives of the performers were admitted. The Hall was rather empty. The visitors sat near the platform, and the students were in possession of the back seats. This arrangement enabled the young women to gossip among themselves, or to flirt with the young men, and gave the latter an opportunity to besiege and conquer the young women's hearts. In fact it seemed as if the entire interest of the young people at these "Students' Recitals" centred in this occupation. The performers were students of mediocre talent, or sometimes children who gave promise of future proficiency, but the pieces they played had long since ceased to arouse interest.

The nights of the "Grand Concerts" are quite a different matter. The public is then admitted, a struggle for seats takes place, the Hall is fully lighted, and the platform is occupied by the favorite pupils of the professors—those idols of the Conser-

Translated by A. Lionel. Copyright, 1896, by the Current Literature Publishing Co.

vatory, who are some day to make the institution famous. On these occasions the students turn out in great numbers, and unable to find room in the crowded Hall, they squeeze into the corridors, treading on one another's toes.

An adult flautist with yellow mustaches has just concluded his number, and, with a face flushed from exertion, has stepped off the platform and disappeared in the corridor. No one has noticed whether his playing was good or bad. He has managed to get through the piece assigned him by his master without a mistake in the tempo. That at least is commendable. Presently a boy came on the platform. He appeared to be about twelve years of age. His small, oval face was pale, and his fair hair carefully brushed and parted on one side. In one hand he held a violin, somewhat smaller than the usual size, and in the other hand the bow. He was dressed in a short, dark gray coat and knickerbockers. Probably neither the appearance nor the playing of this boy would have attracted any more attention than that of the flautist had the professor not followed him on the platform, and seating himself at the piano, commenced a little preliminary improvisation. He evidently intended to play the boy's accompaniment. This caused some surprise and stir in the back rows.

"Who is the boy? Onkel himself is going to play his accompaniment!" queried the young lady pianists of their neighbors, the barytones.

These barytones were the acknowledged irresistibles of the institution. They sat in studied attitudes and

answered questions loftily, scarcely deigning to open their teeth. But this time they could make no reply.

"What? Don't you know?" respectfully asked the trombone player who sat in front, turning his head. Trombone players are generally of awkward, timid disposition, and while barytones, tenors, basses, and violinists revel in dreams of future greatness, the trombonist's aspirations rise no higher than the back row of the orchestra. This must account for the lady pianists' hardness of heart toward them, not to speak of the indifference of the lady singers, who are so constantly devoured by the ardent fire of their ambition.

"It is Spiridonoff, who is full of brilliant promise," explained the trombonist. "Onkel says he'll be a second Paganini, and he hopes to make his own name famous through the boy."

"Oh, Spiridonoff! Is that he?"

For the last year all have heard and spoken of Spiridonoff. The boy had made marvelous progress. Even now he could have played in public and put many a grown violinist to shame. But Onkel would not allow it. He guarded his young talent with the utmost care.

"Why is he so pale, poor little fellow?" asked the florid soprano, whose interest had been aroused by the words of the trombonist.

"Pallor is an attribute of true talent," stated the barytone. He had a pale face surmounted by a shock of black hair.

The trombonist, overwhelmed by the remark—he

possessed neither pallor nor talent—again turned his face to the platform.

Among the friends of the performers, in the second row, on the last chair to the left, sat a man whose eyes were riveted on the boy with unswerving attention. He was tall and slender. His thin hair was combed over from the right temple to the left, and stuck down with pomatum in an evident desire to hide a conspicuous baldness. He must have been over fifty years of age, as there were many and deep wrinkles in his forehead, and his cheeks, and around his eyes and chin. His thin hair too was thickly streaked with gray. The strongly marked eyebrows expressed determination and obstinacy, yet there was a look of gentleness in the eyes. At the present moment he was evidently in an excited, emotional and expectant frame of mind. He wore a long, old-fashioned, black coat, carefully buttoned up to the chin.

The pale boy played. The audience particularly liked the unusual firmness with which he held his violin, and that he used his bow like a familiar weapon. Professor Onkel had acted boldly in selecting a showy concert piece instead of a pupils' "study." But what would you? The old professor was greedy for notoriety, and anxious to display the result of his style of teaching. He succeeded well, for Spiridonoff played splendidly. He executed the difficult passages with great precision, and when feeling was to be expressed, he pressed his bow on the string with laudable correctness. Onkel in his piano accompani-

ment introduced every variety of light and shade. His whole body assisted in the work. He would straighten himself, stretch his neck, or slowly throw himself back in his chair; at other times he would suddenly fling himself over the keys—in short he played with his entire being, which of course deepened the impression produced by the performance. All admired the young virtuoso, whose thin little legs seemed hardly able to support his fragile frame. When he finished playing the applause resounded. This was against the rules, but what rules can control outbursts of wonder and delight?

Spiridonoff made a hasty, awkward little bow, and left the platform, followed by Onkel, swelling with pride and pompousness.

While the next aspirant to fame tortured his instrument on the platform, a small crowd gathered in the corridor and surrounded the boy. The grand Mæcænas with the long gray beard was there. This patron of the institution never missed a single free concert; in fact, he knew the secret of making them all "free" to himself by procuring ingress to the Hall through the dressing-room. He patted young Spiridonoff patronizingly on the head, and disarranged his carefully combed hair.

"You have great talent. You will make the reputation of the Conservatory, the fame of Russia," he said, gulping his words as if in the act of hastily swallowing hot tea.

The young ladies gazed tenderly at the boy, and sighed pityingly at his emaciation and pallor.

Professor Brendel passed by. He, too, was a violinist, but very unlike Onkel. Brendel was tall and slim, Onkel was short and stout. Brendel came from Leipsic, Onkel came from Munich. Brendel hated Onkel, because he was a violinist, and according to Brendel there should be but one violinist in the world, and that one—Brendel. Secondly, he hated Onkel, because this wonder, this little Spiridonoff of whom every one was talking, had been discovered in Onkel's class, and not in his—Brendel's. Lastly, he hated Onkel because the latter dared to exist. Brendel stopped by Spiridonoff and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Not bad!" he said with a Leipsic accent. "Your technique is good for your age, but why did you make so many mistakes?"

This was untrue, and against his own conscience, but he wished to say something disagreeable in the presence of Onkel.

"He made fewer mistakes than Professor Brendel does in making that remark," replied Onkel with a Munich accent.

Brendel pretended not to hear as he disappeared at the end of the corridor.

Little Spiridonoff was tormented on all sides. They peered into his eyes, they slapped him on the shoulder, they patted his head, stroked his cheeks, chucked him under the chin, every one encouraged him and predicted future greatness.

He looked at them all sadly, and received their praises with indifference. He apparently felt shy and weary amid all these ebullitions of feeling. His eyes

searched anxiously for some one, and finally rested reassured on the wrinkled face of the tall man, who some minutes before had sat at the end of the second row, and listened to him with such close attention. The man eagerly noted all the compliments showered on the boy. He was leaning against the half-open door of a class-room, which was this evening serving for a green room, and holding a child's thick overcoat in one hand and in the other a violin case. He approached the boy, relieved him of his violin and bow, and placed them in the case with care. Then, after putting on the boy's overcoat, and muffling a white silk handkerchief around his neck, he took him by the hand, and led him downstairs.

"Spiridonoff," Onkel called, arresting their steps, "prepare yourself for the Grand Concert."

The man in the black, buttoned-up coat made a bow, and then continued downstairs, solicitously assisting the boy at every step.

"That's his father," somebody remarked.

"Fortunate father," exclaimed Onkel, much elated at Spiridonoff's success.

. . . . . .

It was a winter morning, and that early hour when the cold is even severer than during the night. The streets were still dark, and the lamps burning. None but belated pleasure seekers hastening to reach home, or factory workmen wrapped in sheepskins hurrying to their work, were to be seen about. While the rest of the population were yet lost in sleep, a fire was lighted in the small, dingy house of the govern-

ment clerk, Spiridonoff. He had risen at six o'clock, washed and dressed, said his prayers, and cautiously tiptoed into the hall. The house was terribly cold. Mrs. Spiridonoff, who was twenty years younger than her husband, lay sleeping in a large bed with two of her children. Her head was swathed in a cloth, and a mass of clothing was piled on the top of the blanket. This was the only way in which they could keep themselves warm. Old Spiridonoff went through the hall, and feeling for the kitchen door, opened it and entered. A burning lamp emitted an unbearable odor. The cook, like her mistress, was covered over head and ears in rags. It was difficult to tell her head from her feet.

"Arina! Arina!" called Spiridonoff in a low voice, shaking her with both hands. "Get up, it is past six o'clock."

A sigh issued from the rags. Arina was evidently still sleepy, and unwilling to exchange the warmth of the bed for the outside cold.

"Arina, have we any wood?"

"Wood?" answered a voice as if from a tomb, "perhaps enough to heat one stove."

"Good. Get up and light the fire in Mitia's room. At once, do you hear? He'll be getting up soon." Arina's nose appeared from under the bedclothes.

"In Mitia's room? His was heated yesterday. Perhaps it would be better to have a fire in the bedroom. It hasn't had one for two days."

"No, no, no. Mitia's, do you hear? Mitia's room must be warm."

Arina growled her disapproval, nevertheless she got up as soon as Spiridonoff left the room, and after putting on all the rags which had served as her bed covering, she collected the wood which lay under the kitchen table.

"Devils—Anathemas," she grunted, but in such tones that no one could hear her. "Call themselves gentlefolks—keep a cook indeed—haven't money enough to buy a log of wood. Mitia is the only one who is kept warm."

Spiridonoff went into the bedroom, and letting down the cambric bed-curtain, lit a candle. He had on a coat of fox fur, so old that it hung in tatters, and could only be worn for domestic work. He sat down by the table, took a pen, and began writing with half frozen fingers. From time to time he laid down his pen, breathed on his hands, warmed them by the candle flame, and then resumed his work. In half an hour he went to see how Mitia's stove was getting on. It was beginning to feel warm.

"Arina!" again ordered Spiridonoff, "take a piatak" (about three cents). "Here is a piatak. Run to the little store and buy some milk and boil it. Mitia is going to get up, and it must be ready." Arina muttered that she didn't care, milk or no milk, boil or not boil—yet she started off to buy it just the same. Spiridonoff continued to write, warm his hands by the candle, and write again. Arina came to announce that the milk was boiling.

"Aha! Good!"

The old man rose and softly opened the door to the

left. The dim light thrown by the candle from the bedroom disclosed a very small room containing only three articles of furniture—a child's bed, a chair, and a music-stand. In the bed the little virtuoso of last night, Mitia Spiridonoff slumbered sweetly with the blanket drawn up to his chin. The chair served to hold his clothes, the stand his music, while on the floor stood the case containing his violin. The room was not cold. The stove had not had time to get chilled off after yesterday's fire, before the warmth of the new fire made itself felt. Spiridonoff took the candle, and shutting the bedroom door, cautiously sat down on the little bed. "Mitenka, Mitenka!" he called in a tender low voice.

Mitia opened his eyes with an effort, but immediately closed them again.

"Mitenka, don't you want to get up? Eh? Won't you take some hot milk? Eh?"

Mitia again opened his eyes. At first he looked surprised, as if he didn't understand what was wanted of him. Then he recognized his father, and made a pathetic grimace, expressing great disinclination to be roused from his sleep.

"You don't want to? Wish to sleep? Well, sleep, sleep. The milk can wait."

Mitia turned over on his side and hid his face from the old man. But the old man did not leave him. He sat still for a moment, then stretched out his hand and patted the boy on the back.

"But perhaps you will get up, eh? Mitenka! It's nearly seven o'clock, and at ten you have to go to your

class. When will you do your practising? You'd better get up, Mitenka, and drink some warm milk."

Mitia stretched himself, raised his arms, made another pitiful grimace, and finally sat up in bed.

"There's a bright boy! Good Mitenka! There, there, I'll dress you, wash you. You'll say your prayers, drink your milk, and then you'll practise. Mr. Onkel, you know, said you must prepare for the Grand Concert. You must exert yourself to the utmost. There'll be a crowd of people there, and the Prince will come, and ah, we shall be proud of ourselves. Here are your trousers—put them on—That's it! and here's your shirt. What's the matter, Mitenka darling? What is it?"

Mitia with his father's assistance had donned his knickerbockers, and one sleeve of his shirt, when he suddenly burst out crying.

"I am sleepy, Papa dear," he whined in a sad, faint little voice.

On his return home yesterday evening he had played for an hour and a half, and on going to bed had dreamt all night long of a gigantic violin. In his dream his father kept saying to him: "Ah, when you have played on this instrument, then you will be an artist." And now he was so sleepy, and there again he was tormented by the violin.

The old man wiped away the child's tears with his own handkerchief. The boy shook himself, threw off the blanket, and began to dress briskly. He drank the milk, and in ten minutes stood before the low music-stand, and scraped and scraped and scraped on the vio-

lin. About nine o'clock the mother awoke. Her name was Anna Nikitischna. She was of a contented nature, by reason of a robust, healthy body, which was easily kept warm. The woman and the children flung back the bedclothes and other coverings, and ran from the cold room into Mitia's small one. Old Spiridonoff was horrified.

"How dare you? Mitenka is practising. Oh, my God! my God!"

"But what are we to do, Anton Egoritsch? It is so cold the children will freeze."

"But, my God! Mitenka must prepare for the Grand Concert."

"Well, let him do so. In what way do we hinder him? May we not stay, Mitenka?"

"Certainly, mother," answered Mitia sweetly, smiling at his youngest sister who, happy in feeling warm, had begun to play, and was trying to creep into the violin case.

At half-past nine Anton Egoritsch himself brought him an omelet, and taking the violin from his hand, placed it in the case. Mitia hastily ate the omelet, his father almost feeding him while drawing on an old uniform. Anton Egoritsch was soon due at his post in the Chancery Department, where he occupied the lowest and worst paid position—that of copyist. He intended to hand in the work he had done at home, for which he hoped to get extra pay. In that case a fire would be lighted in the bedroom, and the little girls would have breakfast. Now they could only have weak tea and rye bread, and gaze at Mitia's omelet with

hungry eyes. Mitia would gladly share it with them, but Anton Egoritsch was inexorable.

"Have patience, children, have patience. Father will get some extra money, and then you shall breakfast too. Mitenka must eat. He needs all his strength. He'll be an artist, and provide for us all, and make us famous. That's what he'll do, children."

Anna Nikitischna, who never contradicted her husband, looked sadly at her son. Her heart contracted painfully at the sight of his thin body, his pale little face, and hollow cheeks. "The food does him no good," she thought, "and whatever the future may bring, at present he looks wretched." It was not that she doubted Mitia's future fame; on the contrary her heart joyfully inclined to the belief when Anton Egoritsch related to her how surprised and delighted the audience had been last night, and how they had vied with each other in treating Mitia as a phenomenon. She simply understood nothing about it all, and when she listened to the monotonous exercises her son was constantly practising, she couldn't tell whether the playing was good or bad.

After the omelet was finished, Anton Egoritsch wrapped up his son and took him to the Conservatory. Mitia not only studied music there, but also other subjects. The first lesson to-day happened to be "the Russian language." There were about thirty boys in the class. The teacher had not yet arrived, and Mitia found himself in the midst of a scrimmage, which turned out to be a game. He joined in the romp, and was soon jumping and turning somersaults with un-

usual activity and liveliness. What the others did, he did. He felt cheerful and unrestrained. The deep depression which fell on him in consequence of incessant and hard practising instantly vanished. The boys paid him no especial attention, but just treated him like one of themselves. No one seemed to remember the laurels he had won last night, or dwell upon the fact that he was the most talented student of the Conservatory. They were all aware of it, but there was no time to give it a thought at such a moment. The game was a very close one, and the combat of the contending parties very sharp.

The teacher entered, every boy scrambled to his place, and quiet was restored.

Mitia breathed hard, his cheeks burned hotly, and a pleasant warmth diffused itself over his small frail body, a sensation due to the exercise and healthy fatigue of all his muscles.

"If mother could see me now, how pleased she would be!" thought the boy, remembering how frequently she would sigh when she looked at him and say, "Poor child, why are you so pale?"

The lesson over, another recess, another game—more movement, noise, laughter—the free expansion of childhood! These times were Mitia's hours of rest. Let it not be imagined he did not love his work. The violin was his vocation. Three years ago, when he was nine years old, he had begged his father to buy him one, and was very happy when a friend of his father, a fifth-rate musician, taught him how to hold the violin and bow. He began to scrape from morn-

ing to night, profiting by the few hints from the musician. He was quick to comprehend and apply the advice given him. Anton Egoritsch at first regarded it as a simple, childish amusement; then an agreeable uncertainty pervaded his mind. His son might possibly have talent—great talent! He had often heard stories of great musicians, who had sprung from poor and obscure origin. What if his son were destined to greatness, to make his family famous—the poor insignificant Spiridonoff—and, above all, destined to make a fortune, and to lift them all out of this miserable poverty! The idea entirely possessed him, and a year later he took the boy to the Conservatory. He returned after Mitia's first examination with whirling brain. The committee were delighted with the child. His style of playing, acquired from the fifth-rate musician, broke every artistic rule, yet the boy's talent was so evident it showed in every movement of the bow. Onkel emphatically declared he would give up Spiridonoff to nobody, and that he, Onkel, as the oldest professor of the institution, had the right of choice. This Brendel denied, asserting that Onkel had already ruined more than one pupil's talent, that he did nothing but ruin, in fact couldn't do otherwise, as he taught the Munich method—that is to say, a bad method. Then Onkel in his turn derided the Dresden method, proclaiming there was but one method in the world—the Munich.

Their altercation, conducted in Russian, grew louder and louder, and at last when it reached the shouting stage, lapsed into German, Onkel using epithets pecul-

iar to Munich, and Brendel those distinctive of Leipsic. The dispute had to be settled by the Advisory Committee, who assigned Mitia Spiridonoff to Onkel. From that moment Brendel doubted Mitia's talent. But this did not trouble Anton Egoritsch. He was convinced of his son's future fame and wealth, and felt grateful to fortune for sending him such good luck. His whole soul became centred in rearing up the prospective greatness of the Spiridonoff family. He wanted to coerce fate. His scant earnings were all spent on Mitia. Of the two rooms occupied by the family, one was given to Mitia, because he needed pure air and quiet. The rest were crowded in the other room, which served as bedroom, nursery, workroom, dining-room, and parlor. Mitia was well and warmly clad, while the little girls ran around in anything. Mitia's food was unlike theirs. He had breakfast, and a different piece of meat for his dinner, also milk and sweetmeats. Mitia had a comfortable little bed, a soft coverlet, and clean and whole linen. Mitia was treated like a well-paying boarder in a poor family. Anton Egoritsch was so absorbed in his enthusiastic cultivation of the boy's talent, and the glory it would bring to the Spiridonoffs that he often forgot the very existence of the other members of his family. Mitia on his part was forced to pay for all this attention. Every step he took was watched, every minute of his time was taken possession of by his father. The old man entrusted him solely to the Conservatory, believing that every second spent there brought his son nearer to the goal. But as soon as Mitia returned from the Conservatory,

and had had his dinner, the old man would fondle him with one hand and with the other pass him the violin.

"Play a little, dear heart. Mr. Onkel gave you the second movement to study. Play, darling."

And Mitia played. The candles were lighted, he rested for half an hour, drank tea and there! Anton Egoritsch lovingly put his arm around him again and said:

"Well, Mitenka, won't you try this twenty-first exercise? What is it like?— Well? What is the good of wasting time?"

Mitia never refused, because Anton Egoritsch never ordered or compelled him to work. The old man would always ask with a caress or a joke and look affectionately into his eyes. Yet he crushed the child, ground him down with his zealous care and eternal supervision. And Mitia practised and practised. His progress was a surprise to the Conservatory. They found it extraordinary, unnatural. It did not occur to them that Mitia's violin and bow were never out of his hands from seven in the morning till twelve at night, except when walking to the Conservatory or when eating his breakfast or his dinner. It never occurred to them that this wonderful progress was poisoning the life of this child, and was gradually producing a hatred in him of the very instrument for which he had such a calling. Least of all did his father suspect it. His fanatical devotion to the future greatness of the Spiridonoffs blinded him to all else. The apathy, the languor, expressed in the boy's face when he took up the violin and placed himself before the low music-stand, were ignored by him.

He was impervious to the looks of envy that Mitia, while practising the everlasting exercises, would cast through the open door into the next room, where his little sisters were playing. He would not notice how the boy, unknown to himself, would stop in the midst of a trill and stand idly, lost in thought. The father did not perceive that the boy was fading away and becoming silent, indolent, and morose. Anton Egoritsch beheld only the future, and would see and admit nothing in the present that did not tend toward the realization of his dream. The fulfilment of his ambition did not seem far distant now that the whole city was discussing his son's genius. He mused: "The Grand Concert! Mitenka will surprise them. They'll invite him to their fine houses, and bestow presents on him. He will give his own concerts, and then, with Heaven's help, he will go abroad and astound the world."

After his other classes Mitia had a lesson with Onkel. Onkel praised him for yesterday's performance, but added impressively: "You must not fail at the Grand Concert. You must work hard for it."

When Anton Egoritsch returned from the office, where he had succeeded in obtaining the extra money, he called at the Conservatory for Mitia. Onkel repeated to him: "He must work much and earnestly." These words caused Anton Egoritsch to double his watchfulness. Hardly had Mitia finished his dinner that day when the violin was gently pushed into his hands. Anton Egoritsch encouraged him to work by giving him cakes and sweets, producing them from

time to time from his pocket. By every art he could devise he prolonged the child's practising till one o'clock in the morning. Then he undressed him, put him to bed, and softly left the room. Mitia buried his face in the pillow, and burst into tears from sheer fatigue and weariness of spirit. That Grand Concert, which the imagination of Anton Egoritsch painted in such glowing colors, in the child's mind loomed forth as something gloomy, hateful, disgusting.

. . . . . .

The Grand Concert was to take place on Saturday. On Friday morning Anton Egoritsch was up at five o'clock instead of six, and bustling around. He dressed in an absent-minded sort of way, putting on his clothes in a totally different order than that to which he had been accustomed for fifty years of his life. First came his vest, then his trousers, and dressing gown. He splashed the wall badly while washing, and used the sheet instead of the towel, although the towel hung close to his hand. He woke Arina without the slightest ceremony. He just tore the rags off her, and the cold made her promptly leap out of bed.

"Milk," he ordered curtly, and went to Mitia's room to light the fire. At a quarter past six Mitia stood ready before the music-stand. His face, habitually serene and sweet, was dark and angry. He did not look at his father, and complied with all his requests in a mechanical manner.

"Mitenka, darling," rang in his ear the tender, wearying voice of Anton Egoritsch. "Mitenka, my little dove, work on. The day after to-morrow you

shall sleep long, but to-day and to-morrow you must work, my dear heart. Onkel is going to have a rehearsal to-day, and you must do your very best."

Mitia fixed his eyes on the music with an effort. They felt like closing all the while. Never had he so longed to return to his warm bed as this morning. But on he played in order not to hear his father's persistent entreaties. He did not understand why, but every time the pleading "Mitenka darling" struck his ear he shuddered from head to foot, and his heart beat as if in fright. He played badly, out of time, out of tune, slurred notes, still on he went unceasingly, only to avoid that endlessly repeated "Mitenka, little love, little darling. Mr. Onkel said—"

Anton Egoritsch did not go to his office. He sent Arina with a note excusing himself on the plea of illness. How could he think of his work to-day, when the rehearsal, so to say, of the fame of the Spiridonoffs, was to take place? He had no doubt of Onkel's complete satisfaction, but he could not endure the thought of Mitia mounting the last steps to glory except in his presence. Mitia played until the time came for the omelet. The dish was nauseating to him to-day. All that caused his isolation, all that was connected with to-morrow's event, all that deprived him of sleep, rest, childhood's play, childhood's freedom, fresh air, sunshine—Anton Egoritsch, the violin, Onkel, the omelet—the whole combination seemed to him strange and antagonistic, and he would gladly have run away from it all. Anton Egoritsch muffled him up and conducted him to the Conservatory, but this time he did

not leave him there alone. He asked Onkel's permission to remain in the class during the rehearsal.

"It is against my principles to allow parents to be present during the lessons, but I can not refuse a Spiridonoff," said Onkel.

The rehearsal was appointed at eleven o'clock, and an hour intervened. While Anton Egoritsch and Onkel were discussing the various means whereby renown would come to them both through Mitia, the latter made his way to the large corridor on the upper floor, where the boys of his own age were noisily at play. But to-day the game did not attract him. He stood under a low arch, leaning against the wall, and looked on with an unusually serious countenance. He felt a weariness, an exhaustion through his whole being, and a conviction that were he to mingle with the crowd of boys he would quickly be carried off his feet, thrown down, and jeered at. The hustling, the rough handling to which the children were treating each other, and which in their excitement they scarcely heeded, it seemed to him would be impossible for him to endure. He knew the first push would make him cry out.

A pretty, fair, clean little fellow ran up to him. There was a tacit friendship between him and Mitia. They were drawn to each other, and liked to sit together in class, and walk about hand in hand during recess. Ernst Klaider was the son of the organist of the Catholic Church, and was destined for his father's profession. He was a kind, good boy, with gentle blue eyes and a pretty smile on his rosy lips. He never joined in the boisterous games. He was a German.

therefore Onkel would pat him on the cheek when he met him on the stairs, although young Klaider was not a violinist.

"Spiridonoff," said the embryo organist, "are you going to play to-morrow?"

"Yes, I'm to play," answered Mitia sadly.

"Then you have a holiday to-day?"

Mitia looked at him inquiringly. What did he mean by holiday? He never had a holiday.

"I don't know," he said vaguely.

"Do me a favor. It's my little sister's Saint's Day, and we're going to have a little party this evening. Pikoloff is coming, and Kapustin and Kirik and Rapidoff. Do come too. We'll have a dance. Won't you come?"

"A dance?" again asked Mitia vaguely.

It seemed an unheard-of possibility to him. No, never would he be allowed to dance. He would have that violin forced upon him all day, and then all night, and again all day. Ah! just as these thoughts were crossing his mind, and he was preparing to shake his head and say that his father would never premit it, he was seized by the hand, and compelled to turn away.

"Mitenka, little dove, Mr. Onkel is inquiring for you," said Anton Egoritsch.

Mitia shuddered and meekly followed his father. Klaider gravely went up to Anton Egoritsch. "Mr. Spiridonoff, won't you let your son come to us this evening? We've invited some friends, and we are to have great fun."

Anton Egoritsch smiled politely and indulgently.

"No, dear boy. Mitenka can not come. He has to play to-morrow," he said.

Klaider walked away and the others went downstairs. In Onkel's classroom there were only grown-up pupils, but, in spite of his age, Mitia had gained admittance, because of his extraordinary talent.

"Ah, ah, Paganini!" exclaimed Onkel on his appearance. He often called him by that name. "Well, well, play your number. But why are you so pale?"

"He wasn't very well in the night, professor," Anton Egoritsch hastened to reply, but without adding how many hours the boy had been at work. This he considered innocent and justifiable in the interest of Mitenka's future success. Had Onkel known the truth, he would probably have been less amazed at the progress of young Spiridonoff. The boy pulled himself together, summoned up his courage, and played with firmness and confidence. Had it not been for his youth they would certainly have adjudged his playing dry, lifeless, studied, forced. But everybody's attention was held by the rapidity with which the small fingers moved, and the decision with which the bow was guided by the feeble, childish hand. No one sought for deep feeling or soul in one so young.

"What technique, what a grand technique for such a boy!" cried Onkel, pointing out Mitia with emotion and pride to the older pupils, and these, influenced by his words, spread Mitia's fame throughout the Conservatory. The Director himself came into the classroom to listen. He shook his head: "Incomprehensible, how could a boy play like that!" The plaudits

passed by Mitia unheeded, but sank deep into the heart of Anton Egoritsch. On their way down the stairs Anton Egoritsch said softly:

"You see, Mitenka darling, how good it was you listened to me. See how surprised they were."

When they were preparing to depart, and Anton Egoritsch was busied in wrapping up Mitia as if he were a delicate flower, which had to withstand the frost, Klaider, who was also getting ready to go out, approached them.

"Mr. Spiridonoff, won't you please let your son come to us to-day?" entreated the fair boy.

Anton Egoritsch grew red. This time he was angry, and would not even give an answer. He took Mitia into the street, carrying his violin-case, and they stepped into a hired sleigh. Klaider gazed after them and thought, "What a stern father Spiridonoff has."

When they reached home, Mitia greatly pleased his father. Hardly had he eaten his dinner, when, of his own accord, he snatched up his violin, and commenced playing with a zeal Anton Egoritsch had not observed in him for a long time. The child played without stopping. If now and then he allowed himself a moment's pause, as soon as the door would open, and Anton Egoritsch appear on the threshold, he would convulsively seize his bow and play on faster. Mitia did not himself realize what made him do this. He was only conscious that if he heard the usual "Mitenka darling, little dove, you must do your best. You must surprise everybody to-morrow," his hands would begin to tremble, and he would drop the violin to the floor. There-

fore he continued to play on and on—to exhaustion, to stupefaction, only not to hear those or any other words from Anton Egoritsch. But when night set in, and the candles were lit, Mitia suddenly put down the violin, and said: "I am sleepy, papa."

"But how so, Mitenka? You mustn't go to bed like this. You must first drink some tea and get warm."

"No, I want to sleep," declared Mitia, sitting on the side of his bed, and taking off his boots. Anton Egoritsch was going to assist him as was his wont, but Mitia said:

"It's not necessary, father. I will do it myself," and he quickly slipped off his clothes and crept under the blanket, adding: "Father, put out the candle."

Anton Egoritsch was somewhat taken aback by this uncommon behavior. He always undressed Mitia and put him to bed; however, he did not venture to disturb the hero of to-morrow by further questions. He bent down to kiss him good night, but Mitia covered his head, and Anton Egoritsch had to content himself with making the sign of the cross over him and saying:

"Well, sleep, little dove, sleep," thinking meanwhile that the boy was displaying the capricious nature of the artist. He placed the candle on the chair by the bedside with some matches, and then withdrew on tiptoe, carefully closing the door.

For a long time Mitia lay motionless, huddled under the bedclothes. His limbs felt paralyzed, his nerves blunted, no thought was in his head, no desire in his heart, only an indistinct rumbling in his ears, tedious, continuous. In a measure as he got warmed through

he came to himself. He felt oppressed and threw back the blanket. His little sisters were going to bed. They were whimpering and Anton Egoritsch silenced them with: "Hush! Keep quiet. You will wake Mitenka." The boy shudders at the voice, at the words. In the darkness he imagines that very soon his father will cautiously open the door, come in on his toes, and say in caressing tones: "Mitenka, are you rested, darling? Well, then, dear, get up and practise; you know you must surprise everybody to-morrow." The words terrify him and he hides his head fearfully under the coverings. Oh, that cursed to-morrow! Not one of his playfellows has such a "to-morrow" to look forward to. Only grown people are to perform. He will be the only child, and he has to appear at this Grand Concert because he is something wonderful. Were it not for this "to-morrow" he could play with the boys in the morning, and run and jump and laugh as they do. He could be happy this evening at the Klaiders', where there is always so much brightness and heartiness, where there are so many pleasant faces and such sounds of merry laughter.

He can see it all. There is Klaider's fair little sister, whose Saint's Day it is, dressed in a white frock, and there are many other small boys and girls all playing, chattering, and dancing. Not one of them is forced to achieve success in anything, or expected to astound anybody. To-morrow! He will step on the platform looking pale, tired, and with that nagging pain at his heart of which no one knows, and of which no one takes any heed. If he should succeed it will

only make matters worse. He will be taken to receptions, concerts, dragged from city to city. His father has said so. He dreams of it. Then he will never again be free from the violin. The very thought of the violin fills him with hatred and disgust. It is the violin which has deprived him of all that brings joy to other children. There was a time when he loved it, but it has tormented the life out of him, and now he detests it. He experiences an inexpressible relief at the thought that it could be shattered, cut in pieces, and flung into the gutter. He opens his eyes and looks keenly in the direction where the violin stands. His room, and the one next to it, where everybody is now asleep, are perfectly dark. But what of that? He can discern that dreadful violin. He fancies it is a living being, a wicked one, whose aim in existence is to crush the life out of him while he is small, and to give him no chance to grow and become a strong man. Yes, he can see it to its minutest detail! Were the darkness a million times greater still he would not cease to see it. Its outlines are too deeply impressed on his memory, for has he not passed every minute, not spent in eating and sleeping, in its company? It clung to his arm, it rent his heart with its monotonous squeaking. And so it will be all his life. He is doomed to this.

Mitia fell into a troubled sleep. In his dreams strange visions come to him. At one time an enormous violin of impossible dimensions with a tiger's head moves toward him, opening its monstrous jaws to devour him. At another, he beholds his own

violin, but it is no longer in its case. It has grown fast to his chest, he tries with all his might to wrench it off, but in vain; it is part of himself, like his arm, his leg, or his head. And Anton Egoritsch is pushing the bow into his hand and whispering: "Play, Mitenka, play, little dove, now it has grown part of you, you can't help yourself." He would like to join in the games of the little girls and boys who are moving around merrily in their light holiday dresses in the brightly illumined room. But it is impossible, the violin is part of himself, and Anton Egoritsch is leading him on the platform. The Hall is full of people, great ladies and fine-looking gentlemen; and there in the front row sits the Prince fixing him with his single eyeglass. A great stillness prevails in anticipation of his playing. Anton Egoritsch is at his back and whispers in his ear: "Play, Mitenka, and play to astonish them all. Then there will be fame and wealth." No, he will not play. He wants no fame, no wealth. All he wants is freedom—freedom to live as other children live—to play, to rejoice, to laugh—"Play," whispers Anton Egoritsch, "dearest little one, play." "No, I won't, I won't. There." With both hands Mitia grasps the violin grown to his breast, summons all his strength, and with a cry tears it away, and with it a portion of his body. A river of blood flows from the wound. The audience, the Prince, all are wildly applauding and calling "Bravo! Bravo!"

Anton Egoritsch, beaming with gratification, is loudest in his applause. Onkel steps on the platform

and shouts: "It is I who have made so superb a musician of him. His fame is my fame!"

"No," says Anton Egoritsch. "It is my fame. Mine, mine, mine." They quarrel, they fight, and no one notices that meanwhile he is bleeding to death.

Mitia awakes in terror. He clutches at his chest, which aches unbearably. The dawn is breaking. He can faintly distinguish the objects in the room. The first to meet his eye is the violin peeping from its open case, the first thought to strike his mind—to-day's Grand Concert. Success, universal admiration, invitations, parties, concerts, and at home the never-ending practising. The more his fame increases, the more frequent, unceasing, will be the demands of Anton Egoritsch. "Mitenka, little dove, play the twenty-third exercise. Mr. Onkel says—"

A feeling of despair comes over him. Life to him seems but a narrow, dark dungeon from which he is released only that he may show the public what progress he has made—then he must back to prison. The violin is an instrument of torture, Anton Egoritsch and Onkel are jailers, hangmen, who watch his every breath. He turns his head toward the door, and listens with beating heart. Seven o'clock strikes—he will soon be here, will bring the milk, will say: "Mitenka, play, apply yourself, little dove. To-day is the Grand Concert."

He hears a match struck, he hears the flip-flop of slippers, the jailer is coming! No, he has gone to the kitchen for the milk. In half an hour he will be here, then the violin, the practising, the endless, never vary-

ing scraping for ever and ever—and all for the sake of a something called fame. Mitia gets up and presses his teeth into his lower lip till the blood comes. "Wait, dear Papa, wait. I will arrange a fame for you." He is as pale as his sheet. His eyes are wandering and full of tears. His frail body is shaking with fever. He has but one thought in his mind: "I must be quick—in half an hour the jailer will be here." He hastens his actions. With trembling hands he grasps his leather belt and fastens one end to the hook which holds the towel. Then he makes a loop and pauses. He signs himself with the cross ardently and firmly. Big tears course down his cheeks unrestrainedly. He is intensely sorry for some one. Somebody beckons to him—is it his mother or his little sisters? But the jailer is coming. There is not a moment to lose. Again he makes the sign of the cross, closes his eyes, and puts his head into the noose.

. . . . . .

At ten o'clock, on the morning of the same day, a woman rushed into the Conservatory. Her hair was disheveled, and in spite of the cold she was very thinly clad. She cried, screamed, wrung her hands, but could find no words to give expression to her sorrow. She was taken to the Director, who placed her in a chair and said:

"Calm yourself, Madam, and tell us what is the matter. We will do all we can for you."

But he felt ashamed of these politely sympathetic words when he finally succeeded in learning that the woman was the mother of Mitia Spiridonoff, and that

the hope and future pride of the Conservatory had that morning hanged himself in his room by a leather belt. He was further shocked to learn that Anton Egoritsch, that honorable elderly man, whom they had all so often seen leading his son by the hand, had lost his reason, that he neither saw nor heard, but sat hugging Mitia's violin, kissing it and saying: "This is my son, my son. He will make us famous."

When Onkel heard of the catastrophe, he staggered and fell back heavily in his chair. He narrowly escaped a paralytic stroke. Through Mitia's death the greatest chance of his life to acquire fame was lost.

In half an hour the Conservatory was in a state of horror. The terrible news had rapidly spread from mouth to mouth. The ladies cried, fainted, or went into hysterics.

The following day the entire Conservatory was at the funeral of Mitia Spiridonoff. His playfellows carried the small coffin, followed by his grief-stricken mother and little sisters. Anton Egoritsch alone was not there. They had been compelled to send him to the asylum. He had broken into ravings and cursings by Mitia's coffin.

A WORK OF ART
AND
THE SLANDERER

BY ANTON PAVLOVITCH CHEKHOV

Chekhov, who has been called the Russian De Maupassant, was born of humble parents in the suburbs of Moscow in 1860, and died of consumption in 1904. Though he received the degree of M.D., he never practised medicine. His was a nature far more poetical than that of De Maupassant, and it would perhaps be nearer right to call him a Russian Stevenson, for, like him, he had a lifelong struggle against illness, and, like him, illness and suffering mellowed and sweetened his character. Chekhov was an artist to his finger-tips, in a sense and to a degree beyond that of any of his Russian predecessors.

A WORK OF ART

THE STORY OF A GIFT

BY ANTON CHEKHOV

ALEXANDER SMIRNOFF, the only son of his mother, holding in his hand some object carefully wrapped in a newspaper, an angelic smile on his youthful face, entered the consulting-room of Dr. Koshelkoff.

"Ah, dear youth!" exclaimed the doctor, "how are you? What is the good news?"

Confused and excited, the young man replied:

"Doctor, my mother is sending her regards— I am her only son, you know— You saved my life. Your skill— We hardly know how to thank you!"

"Say no more, dear boy!" said the doctor, beaming with delight. "I have only done my duty. Anybody else would have done the same."

"I am the only son of my mother. We are poor, and, of course, can not repay you for your labors as you have deserved—and we feel it deeply. At the same time my mother—I am her only son, doctor —my mother humbly begs you to accept as a token of our gratitude a little statuette she values very highly. It is a piece of antique bronze, and a rare work of art."

Translated by Archibald J. Wolfe. Copyright, 1905, by the Short Stories Co., Limited.

"My good fellow—" commenced the physician.

"No, doctor, you must not refuse," continued Alexander, unfolding his parcel. "You will deeply offend mother and myself, too. It is a little beauty. A rare antique. We have kept it in memory of father, who was a dealer in antique bronzes. My mother and myself continue the business."

Finally the youth succeeded in freeing his present from its wrappings, and placed it on the table with an air of great solemnity. It was a moderately tall candelabrum of antique bronze and of artistic workmanship. It represented two female figures somewhat scantily attired, and bearing an air of frivolity to describe which I have neither the required daring nor the temperament. The figures smiled coquettishly, and looked as if they were ready to jump on the floor and to engage in some wild frolic, were they not restrained by the task of supporting the candle holder.

The doctor regarded his present for a few moments in silence, then scratched his head and coughed irresolutely.

"A beautiful article, to be sure," he finally said. "But you know—what shall I say? Why, it is hardly the thing, you know. Talk of *déshabille!* This is beyond the bounds of propriety. The devil!"

"W-w-why?"

"Now, how could I put a thing like that on my table? It will corrupt my residence."

"Doctor, you surprise me," answered Alexander, with an offended tone. "What queer views of art!

This is a work of art! Look at it! What beauty, what delicacy of workmanship! It fills the soul with joy merely to look at it; it brings tears to one's eyes. Observe the movement, the atmosphere, the expression!"

"I fully appreciate it, my boy," interrupted the physician. "But you know I am a man of family. I have children. A mother-in-law. Ladies call here."

"Of course, if you look at it from the point of view of the common herd, you might regard it in a different light. But I beg of you, rise above the mob. Your refusal would hurt the feelings of my mother and of myself. I am her only son. You saved my life. We are asking you to accept something we hold very dear. I only deplore the fact that we have no companion piece to it."

"Thank you, dear fellow, and thank your mother. I see that I can not reason with you. But you should have thought of my children, you know, and the ladies. But I fear you will not listen to arguments."

"No use arguing, doctor," replied the grateful patient, made happy by the implied acceptance. "You put it right here, next to the Japanese vase. What a pity I have not the pair. What a pity!"

When his caller departed the doctor thoughtfully regarded his unwelcome present. He scratched his head and pondered.

"It is an exquisite thing, without doubt. It would be a pity to throw it into the street. It is quite impossible to leave it here, though. What a dilemma to

be in. To whom could I give it? How to get rid of it?"

Finally he bethought himself of Ukhoff, a dear friend of his school days, and a rising lawyer, who had just successfully represented him in some trifling case.

"Good," said the doctor. "As a friend he refused to charge me a fee, and it is perfectly proper that I should make him a present. Besides, he is a single man and tremendously sporty."

Losing no time, the doctor carefully wrapped up the candlestick and drove to Ukhoff.

"There, old chap," he said to the lawyer, whom he happily found at home; "there I have come to thank you for that little favor. You refused to charge me a fee, but you must accept this present in token of my gratitude. Look—what a beauty!"

On seeing the present the attorney was transported with delight.

"This beats everything!" he fairly howled. "Hang it all, what inventive genius! Exquisite, immense. Where did you get such a little gem?"

Having expressed his delight, the lawyer anxiously looked at his friend and said:

"But, you know, you must not leave this thing here. I can not accept it."

"Why?" gasped the doctor.

"You know my mother calls here, clients, I would not dare to look my servants in the face. Take it away."

"Never! You must not refuse," exclaimed the

physician with the energy of despair. "Look at the workmanship! Look at the expression! I will not listen to any refusals. I will feel insulted."

With these words the doctor hurried out of the house.

"A white elephant," the lawyer mumbled sadly, while the doctor, rubbing his hands with glee, drove home with an expression of relief.

The attorney studied his present at length and wondered what to do with it.

"It is simply delicious, but I can not keep it. It would be vandalism to throw it away, and the only thing to do is to give it away. But to whom?

"I have it now," he fairly shouted. "The very thing, and how appropriate. I will take it to Shashkin, the comedian. The rascal is a connoisseur in such things. And this is the night of his jubilee."

In the evening the candelabrum, carefully wrapped, was taken to Shashkin's dressing-room by a messenger boy. The whole evening that dressing-room was besieged by a crowd of men who came to view the present. An incessant roar of delight was kept up within, sounding like the joyous neighing of many horses. Whenever an actress approached the door leading to the sanctum, and curiously knocked, Shashkin's hoarse voice was heard in reply:

"No, my dear, you can't come in, I am not fully dressed."

After the performance Shashkin shrugged his shoulders and said:

"What on earth shall I do with this disreputable

thing? My landlady would not tolerate it in the house. Here actresses call to see me. This is not a photograph, you can't hide it in the drawer."

The hair-dresser listened sympathetically while arranging the comedian's hair.

"Why don't you sell it?" he finally asked the actor. "A neighbor of mine, an old lady, deals in such things, and she will pay you a good price for it. An old woman by the name of Smirnoff, the whole town knows her."

Shashkin obeyed.

. . . . . .

Two days later Dr. Koshelkoff sat peacefully in his study, enjoying his pipe and thinking of things medical, when suddenly the door of his room flew open, and Alexander Smirnoff burst upon his sight. His face beamed with joy, he fairly shone, and his whole body breathed inexpressible content.

In his hands he held an object wrapped in a newspaper.

"Doctor," he began breathlessly, "imagine my joy! What good fortune! Luckily for you my mother has succeeded in obtaining a companion piece to your candelabrum. You now have the pair complete. Mother is so happy. I am her only son, you know. You saved my life."

Trembling with joy and with excess of gratitude, young Smirnoff placed the candelabrum before the doctor. The physician opened his mouth, attempted to say something, but the power of speech failed him —and he said nothing.

THE SLANDERER

BY ANTON CHEKHOV

SERGEY KAPITONICH AKHINEYEV, the teacher of calligraphy, gave his daughter Natalya in marriage to the teacher of history and geography, Ivan Petrovich Loshadinikh. The wedding feast went on swimmingly. They sang, played, and danced in the parlor. Waiters, hired for the occasion from the club, bustled about hither and thither like madmen, in black frock coats and soiled white neckties. A loud noise of voices smote the air. From the outside people looked in at the windows—their social standing gave them no right to enter.

Just at midnight the host, Akhineyev, made his way to the kitchen to see whether everything was ready for the supper. The kitchen was filled with smoke from the floor to the ceiling; the smoke reeked with the odors of geese, ducks, and many other things. Victuals and beverages were scattered about on two tables in artistic disorder. Marfa, the cook, a stout, red-faced woman, was busying herself near the loaded tables.

"Show me the sturgeon, dear," said Akhineyev, rubbing his hands and licking his lips. "What a fine odor! I could just devour the whole kitchen! Well, let me see the sturgeon!"

Translated by Herman Bernstein. Copyright, 1901, by the Globe and Commercial Advertiser.

Marfa walked up to one of the benches and carefully lifted a greasy newspaper. Beneath that paper, in a huge dish, lay a big fat sturgeon, amid capers, olives, and carrots. Akhineyev glanced at the sturgeon and heaved a sigh of relief. His face became radiant, his eyes rolled. He bent down, and, smacking his lips, gave vent to a sound like a creaking wheel. He stood a while, then snapped his fingers for pleasure, and smacked his lips once more.

"Bah! The sound of a hearty kiss. Whom have you been kissing there, Marfusha?" some one's voice was heard from the adjoining room, and soon the closely cropped head of Vankin, the assistant school instructor, appeared in the doorway. "Whom have you been kissing here? A-a-ah! Very good! Sergey Kapitonich! A fine old man indeed! With the female sex tête-à-tête!"

"I wasn't kissing at all," said Akhineyev, confused; "who told you, you fool? I only—smacked my lips on account of—in consideration of my pleasure—at the sight of the fish."

"Tell that to some one else, not to me!" exclaimed Vankin, whose face expanded into a broad smile as he disappeared behind the door. Akhineyev blushed.

"The devil knows what may be the outcome of this!" he thought. "He'll go about tale-bearing now, the rascal. He'll disgrace me before the whole town, the brute!"

Akhineyev entered the parlor timidly and cast furtive glances to see what Vankin was doing. Vankin stood near the piano and, deftly bending down, whis-

pered something to the inspector's sister-in-law, who was laughing.

"That's about me!" thought Akhineyev. "About me, the devil take him! She believes him, she's laughing. My God! No, that mustn't be left like that. No. I'll have to fix it so that no one shall believe him. I'll speak to all of them, and he'll remain a foolish gossip in the end."

Akhineyev scratched his head, and, still confused, walked up to Padekoi.

"I was in the kitchen a little while ago, arranging things there for the supper," he said to the Frenchman. "You like fish, I know, and I have a sturgeon just so big. About two yards. Ha, ha, ha! Yes, by the way, I have almost forgotten. There was a real anecdote about that sturgeon in the kitchen. I entered the kitchen a little while ago and wanted to examine the food. I glanced at the sturgeon and for pleasure, I smacked my lips—it was so piquant! And just at that moment the fool Vankin entered and says —ha, ha, ha—and says: 'A-a! A-a-ah! You have been kissing here?'—with Marfa; just think of it—with the cook! What a piece of invention, that blockhead. The woman is ugly, she looks like a monkey, and he says we were kissing. What a queer fellow!"

"Who's a queer fellow?" asked Tarantulov, as he approached them.

"I refer to Vankin. I went out into the kitchen—"

The story of Marfa and the sturgeon was repeated.

"That makes me laugh. What a queer fellow he is. In my opinion it is more pleasant to kiss the dog

than to kiss Marfa," added Akhineyev, and, turning around, he noticed Mzda.

"We have been speaking about Vankin," he said to him. "What a queer fellow. He entered the kitchen and noticed me standing beside Marfa, and immediately he began to invent different stories. 'What?' he says, 'you have been kissing each other!' He was drunk, so he must have been dreaming. 'And I,' I said, 'I would rather kiss a duck than kiss Marfa. And I have a wife,' said I, 'you fool.' He made me appear ridiculous."

"Who made you appear ridiculous?" inquired the teacher of religion, addressing Akhineyev.

"Vankin. I was standing in the kitchen, you know, and looking at the sturgeon—" And so forth. In about half an hour all the guests knew the story about Vankin and the sturgeon.

"Now let him tell," thought Akhineyev, rubbing his hands. "Let him do it. He'll start to tell them, and they'll cut him short: 'Don't talk nonsense, you fool! We know all about it.'"

And Akhineyev felt so much appeased that, for joy, he drank four glasses of brandy over and above his fill. Having escorted his daughter to her room, he went to his own and soon slept the sleep of an innocent child, and on the following day he no longer remembered the story of the sturgeon. But, alas! Man proposes and God disposes. The evil tongue does its wicked work, and even Akhineyev's cunning did not do him any good. One week later, on a Wednesday, after the third lesson, when Akhineyev stood in the teachers'

room and discussed the vicious inclinations of the pupil Visyekin, the director approached him, and, beckoning to him, called him aside.

"See here, Sergey Kapitonich," said the director. "Pardon me. It isn't my affair, yet I must make it clear to you, nevertheless. It is my duty— You see, rumors are on foot that you are on intimate terms with that woman—with your cook— It isn't my affair, but— You may be on intimate terms with her, you may kiss her— You may do whatever you like, but, please, don't do it so openly! I beg of you. Don't forget that you are a pedagogue."

Akhineyev stood as though frozen and petrified. Like one stung by a swarm of bees and scalded with boiling water, he went home. On his way it seemed to him as though the whole town stared at him as at one besmeared with tar— At home new troubles awaited him.

"Why don't you eat anything?" asked his wife at their dinner. "What are you thinking about? Are you thinking about Cupid, eh? You are longing for Marfushka. I know everything already, you Mahomet. Kind people have opened my eyes, you barbarian!"

And she slapped him on the cheek.

He rose from the table, and staggering, without cap or coat, directed his footsteps toward Vankin. The latter was at home.

"You rascal!" he said to Vankin. "Why have you covered me with mud before the whole world? Why have you slandered me?"

"How; what slander? What are you inventing?"

"And who told everybody that I was kissing Marfa? Not you, perhaps? Not you, you murderer?"

Vankin began to blink his eyes, and all the fibres of his face began to quiver. He lifted his eyes toward the image and ejaculated:

"May God punish me, may I lose my eyesight and die, if I said even a single word about you to any one! May I have neither house nor home!"

Vankin's sincerity admitted of no doubt. It was evident that it was not he who had gossiped.

"But who was it? Who?" Akhineyev asked himself, going over in his mind all his acquaintances, and striking his chest. "Who was it?"

FAUST

BY EUGENE NIKOLAIEVITCH CHIRIKOV

Chirikov was born in 1864. He comes of a noble family from the Province of Smibirsk. Though he began to write while still a law student and worked a long time for the provincial press, his real literary career dates from 1893.

In later years Chirikov abandoned his didactic themes and devoted himself entirely to purely psychological studies of provincial life which he knows so well and of which "Faust" is a good example.

One of his plays, "The Chosen People," was produced in America by the Orleniev Company of Russian actors, of which Mme. Nazimova was a member.

FAUST

BY EUGENE CHIRIKOV

WHEN Ivan Mikhailovich awoke one morning, the whole household was already long up, and from the distance came the ringing voices of the children, the rattling of the breakfast dishes, the commanding voice of Maria Petrovna, his mother-in-law, and from the drawing-room the chirping of the canary, which sounded to his ears like a policeman's whistle. He did not feel like getting up —he felt like lying a bit longer, too lazy to dress, therefore he smoked a few cigarettes before getting up strength for the ordeal.

He usually rose dissatisfied and out of sorts, because he did not much fancy the rules of life by which one had to hurry with ablutions, toilet, breakfast, and then go to the bank.

"Go and see if papa has awakened yet!" he heard his wife's voice, and a moment afterward a round, little head was thrust through the doorway, and a child's treble chimed in:

"Papa! Are you up?"

"I am, I am!" Ivan Mikhailovich replied, ill-pleased, and angrily rinsed his mouth, gurgling, sputtering, and groaning.

At the breakfast table he sat sulky and preoccu-

Translated by Lizzie B. Gorin. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

pied, as if wholly taken up with some very important thoughts, and did not deign to pay the least attention to any one. His wife, casually glancing up at him, thought: "He must have lost at cards at the club last night, and does not know now where to get the money to pay up."

At ten, Ivan Mikhailovich went to the bank, from which he returned at four, tired, hungry, and out of sorts. Sitting down to the table, he tucked his napkin under his chin, and ate with a loud smacking of the lips; after he had filled himself, he invariably grew good-natured, and said: "Well, now we shall take a little nap," and went into his study, in which were displayed a bearskin, a pair of reindeer antlers, and a rifle from which he had never fired a shot. There he coughed and spat for a long time, and afterward snored so loudly that the children feared to approach too near the door of the study, and when the nurse wished to stop a fight or a quarrel between them, she would say: "There—the bear is asleep in papa's room —I will let the bear out after you!"

Ivan Mikhailovich was usually awakened about eight in the evening, when he would once more grow angry and shout: "Yes, yes, I hear," immediately falling asleep again. Afterward he came out of the study puffy and heavy-eyed, looking indeed very much like a bear, and began to shout in a husky voice:

"I would like to know why I was not awakened in time?"

"You were, and you replied, 'I hear!' "

"I did! Well, what of it? A person is not sup-

posed to be responsible for what he says when half asleep. Is the samovar ready?"

Then he went into the dining-room, and sat down to the tea-table with his paper—and again with the appearance of a man whose thoughts are wholly occupied with very serious and important matters. His wife, Xenia Pavlovna, poured out the tea, and he could hardly see her face from behind the samovar. Maria Petrovna sat at the other end of the table, with a child's stocking in her hand, which she was forever darning.

They were generally silent, only rarely exchanging laconic questions and answers: "More tea?"—"Please"—"Again there is no lemon?"—'Why, it is lying before your very nose!"

After tea Ivan Mikhailovich went to his club, where he played cards, after which he had his supper there, and coming home about two past midnight, he found his wife already sleeping. Only Maria Petrovna was still up, and she usually met him in deshabille, with an old wrap thrown over her shoulders, her hair in disorder, and with sighs. Ivan Mikhailovich understood but too well the hidden meaning of these sighs: they expressed silent reproaches and indirect disapproval of his conduct. Therefore, while taking off his rubbers, Ivan Mikhailovich said: "Please spare me your sighs!"

Xenia Pavlovna never reproached her husband. She had long ago become accustomed to either Ivan Mikhailovich's snoring or being away. Only Maria Petrovna could not become resigned to it.

"What kind of a husband is he! All you see of him is his dressing-gown on the peg," she said.

"Oh, don't say that, mother. All husbands are like that," remarked Xenia Pavlovna, but her face became sad and clouded, and at last a sort of concentrated musing settled upon it. Walking up and down the salon in the twilight, she would keep thinking about something or other, and sing in a low, sweet voice: "Beyond the distant horizon there is a happy land."

Then she shook her head with a jerk and went into the nursery. Here she played dolls with the children, romped about with them, and told them fairy-tales about Sister Alenushka and Brother Ivanushka.

The older boy was very like his father before the latter got into the habit of snoring and spitting and appearing before Xenia Pavlovna in his shirtsleeves. Gazing at this boy of hers, Xenia Pavlovna was carried away into the past, and the dreams of her faraway youth, dimmed and partly obscured by time, drove out of her heart the feeling of emptiness, oppressive ennui, and dissatisfaction.

"Mama! Mamochka! Now tell us about Baba Yaga! Good?"

"Well, very good. Once there was a Baba Yaga, with a bony leg—"

"Did she snore?" asked the little girl, and her blue eyes opened wide, resting with fear and expectation on her mother's face. Xenia Pavlovna broke out in a hearty laugh, caught her girlie in her arms, and, kissing her, forgot everything else in the world.

About twice a month they received. All their

guests were sedate, respectable, and dull; people whose whole life ran smoothly, monotonously, without a hitch, through the same deep rut; they were all very tiresome, and loved to tell the same things over and over, and behave and act as if by long-established rule. First they sat in the drawing-room and spoke of their dwellings, of the weather, and while Xenia Pavlovna entertained them with conversation, her mother set the tea things, and while she filled the dishes with preserves she looked apprehensively into the jars and muttered: "It's lasting so well that fresh fruit is not even to be thought of. The Lord grant it lasts till Easter." And putting the sugar from the large paper bag into the cut-glass sugar-bowl, she thought aloud: "Twenty pounds, indeed! Why, even forty would not suffice!"

"Please come and have some tea!" she said invitingly, with an amiable, pleasant smile on her face. In the dining-room, where tea was served, they all took their places in a staid and dignified manner, making fun of those who were unlucky enough to get places at the table corners, telling them that they would not marry for seven years; and playing with their teaspoons, they said: "Merci," and "Ach, if you will be so kind!" And then they once more returned to the talk about their apartments, the high price of provisions, and the ailments of the little ones. Tea finished, they repaired to the drawing-room, in which the little card-tables had already been placed, and provided with candles, cards, and chalk; everybody became livelier, and the oppressive frame of mind, under which people

always labor when they are called upon to do something they had not come to do, was dispelled.

The gentlemen and ladies sat down at the tables, quarreled, disputed, reproached one another, and broke out simultaneously into peals of merriment; in the main, they all seemed now the most happy people in the world. They were so much engrossed with the play that they resembled maniacs, who could with difficulty understand if an outsider, there by some chance, not playing cards, and therefore suffering with ennui, spoke to them about some outside matter.

Xenia Pavlovna did not play: she and her mother were wholly taken up with the preparations for supper, while the guests were occupied with the whist-tables. She and Maria Petrovna quarreled a little on such occasions, but always managed to hide their differences from their guests.

When supper was announced all the guests sprang from their seats, pushed back their chairs, and laughingly went to the table. Only two of the most enthusiastic would remain in their places, and continue to wrangle and to gesticulate over the Knave of Spades, seeming not to care whether they had their supper or not, if only they could prove to each other the truth of their own assertions. The master of the house would put his arm about the waist of each and carry them off.

"Well, let us have a tiny one!" Ivan Mikhailovich generally began. A few "tiny" ones were drunk without any well-wishing, then they drank the health of Xenia Pavlovna and the other ladies present. Their

faces reddened, their eyes became languishing, and from across the table was continually heard: "Please pass the caviar this way, Peter Vasilievich!" or "Please send those delicious herrings our way, Nicolai Gregorievich!"

Bon mots, jests, and anecdotes were incessantly exchanged, some of them very stale and told for the fiftieth time at that very table. On these occasions Ivan Mikhailovich never failed to recount with evident pride that he and Xenia had married for love. "Ours was a love match. I can almost say that I abducted Xenia Pavlovna."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, just so! I remember it as if it happened today. I nearly committed suicide! Yes! We had an appointment in the garden (a luxurious garden it was! They very foolishly sold both the house and garden!) Well, so I stand there in the old arbor, stand and wait. And my heart is beating so loudly that it seems to me that a train must be passing somewhere—tock-tock-tock!" Here Ivan Mikhailovich began to tell in detail how it all happened, and Xenia Pavlovna listened to his narrative from where she sat, slightly blushing, with half-closed eyes, and a little shiver. "At last she arrived in a carriage!"

"Came on foot, not in a carriage!" Xenia Pavlovna unexpectedly corrected him, because every stroke, every detail of these far-away recollections was inexpressibly dear to her.

"Well, in a carriage or on foot. What material difference does it make!" angrily remarked Ivan Mikhail-

ovich, greatly displeased at being interrupted, and continued his story, totally ignoring the correction as well as Xenia Pavlovna herself, as if this Xenia Pavlovna and—that other one—about whom he was telling his guests had nothing whatsoever in common.

After supper they once more drank tea, yawned, covering the mouth with the hand, or with the napkin, and breathed hard, looking at their watches, and exchanging glances with their wives. "Yes, it is about time!" replied the wives, and the guests began to take their leave, the women kissed good-by, the men looked for their rubbers and hats, and again joked.

After the guests had gone, leaving behind them tobacco smoke, glasses half-full of undrunk tea, and the scraps of the supper, the house suddenly subsided into quiet and peace, and Xenia Pavlovna sank into a chair, and remained motionless in a silent antipathy to her surroundings. She rested from the idle talk, noise, amiable smiles, and entertaining, and felt as if she were just recovering from a serious illness or had had to go through some severe penance. The mother, passing through the drawing-room, quickly threw open the ventilators, and remarked: "Just like a barrack," pulling out of the jardinieres the cigarette-stubs which had been stuck into the earth by the smokers, and, waxing angry: "I purposely placed two ash-trays on each card-table, but no! they must go and stick their cigarette-stubs into the flower-pots!" Then she began to set the house to rights and clear the tables; and all this she did with irritation. Ivan Mikhailovich threw off his coat, opened his vest, and, walking through the

rooms, yawned, opening his mouth wide and displaying his teeth. Then he went into the bedroom, undressed, and stretched himself comfortably on the soft mattress of the splendid, wide bed.

"Can't you leave off putting the things in order till morning! Eh, how cleanliness has suddenly taken hold of them!" he shouted through the whole house, and listened: "Well, now the babes have revolted!"

From the nursery came the crying of the children and the soothing voice of his wife. Well, now he knew that the racket would go on for a long time—she would not get away from them so soon. And, turning to the wall, he pulled the coverlet higher.

Once or twice during the month they went visiting. And there the same story was repeated: conversations about the health of the little ones, the dwelling-houses, servants, the green tables, cigarette smoke, disputes about the Knave of Spades, and a supper with vodka, cheap wine, caviar, pickled herrings, and the indispensable cutlets and green pease. And after they left here, too, no doubt, was an opening of ventilators, and a perfect enjoyment of the ensuing quiet and peace.

And so their life went on from day to day, monotonous and tiresome, like a rainy evening, when everything is wet, gray, and cloudy—an oppressive, colorless life. "We live just as if we were turning over the pages of a cook-book. One day only differs from another in so far as that yesterday we had rice soup and cutlets for dinner, and to-day cabbage soup and cutlets," sometimes thought Xenia Pavlovna, and a kind of despair suddenly took possession of all her

being, and it seemed to her that she must decide on something, do something. But what should she do? And in reply to this a sad smile appeared on her lips —gentle and helpless—and her eyes filled with unbidden tears.

Then she would get a fit of the blues. Everything suddenly began to bore her, she did not care to see any one, nor talk to any one; it seemed to her that people spoke not of what they thought, nor of what interested them, but were, on the contrary, doing their best to hide their real thoughts; that they laughed at things not because they thought them laughable, but simply from politeness and wishing to appear amiable. And that all of them were only pretending to be good and clever, while in reality they were trivial, stupid, and unbearably tiresome.

She sat down at the window, resting her head on her hand, and looked out upon the street, where the tiresome, hateful day was dying away in a gray twilight. She remembered her youth, when life had seemed so big, with immeasurable horizons enveloped in an alluring, dove-colored mist, so interesting in its endless variations, so enigmatic and incomprehensible; when it seemed that the most important and wished-for thing was still before her, when her maiden heart stood still with fear and curiosity before the unknown future, when her heart was filled with a vague alarm in the expectation of a great happiness, perhaps the happiness of a triumphant love. And here it is—real life. The horizon ends with the grocery store across the street and is enveloped in the poesy of the cook-

book. All of them live from day to day, are bored, gossip, speak of their dwellings, servants, occupations, play cards, bear children, and complain—the husbands about their wives and the wives about their husbands. And there is no triumphant love anywhere—but only triumphant triviality, rascality, and ennui. All that was interesting in life was already a thing of the past, it had all happened long before; then she had been supremely happy, and that happiness—which is given to one only once in life—passed away imperceptibly, and would nevermore return.

It grew darker; on the streets appeared timidly blinking yellow lights. The bells rang for vespers, and this ringing of the church-bells awakened in her soul something vague and alarming: a sad longing for something which had gone forever; or was it that it reproached the soul soiled by life? "Evening bells, evening bells!" Xenia whispered with a deep sigh.

Suddenly in the dim drawing-room appeared a whitish figure: it was Ivan Mikhailovich, who came out of his study without a vest. He stretched, yawned, let out an "O-go-go-go!" and remarked: "I dined well and enjoyed a splendid snooze. What are you dreaming about?"

"Oh, just so, I was thinking what a tiresome affair it is to live in this world!"

"How is that! After you have given birth to three children you all at once begin to find life tiresome?"

"Oh, how commonplace and trivial this is!"

"Well, you are again in the dumps!" Ivan Mikhailovich spoke angrily and turned away. Xenia Pavlovna

broke into a laugh, then this laugh became intermixed with crying, and ended in hysterics.

"W-ell! The devil is loose!" muttered Ivan Mikhailovich, and rang for the maid, whom he ordered to fetch some water. "Cold, from the faucet."

His mother-in-law, rushing into the room, cried: "What is the matter? What have you done to her?" The whites of her eyes glittered in the dark, and her whole demeanor expressed a thirst for revenge and complete redress. "What have you done to her?"

"I have done absolutely nothing to her! And I do not know, absolutely do not know, why she started all this comedy! She is simply an unbalanced woman, your daughter is, absolutely unbalanced!"

"You have offended her?"

"Neither by word nor intention! I came into the drawing-room and found her moaning at the window; all at once, without provocation, she began to laugh, then to cry," said Ivan Mikhailovich, shrugging his shoulders and gesticulating, and Maria Petrovna, whom Ivan Mikhailovich, in moments of exasperation, sometimes called "the old witch," did not believe him, and insistently demanded an explanation: "Don't you tell me that. Where did you get it that she is unbalanced? We never had any one of an unbalanced mind in our family—every one was healthy and sane. What have you been doing to her?"

"All right, then! All right, if they were all sane and normal! I am glad to hear it!" said Ivan Mikhailovich angrily, and speedily left the house. He went to the club, where he played cards, playing high

from pure spite, and losing also from pure spitefulness. In the mean time Maria Petrovna walked around with a pained expression on her face, not being able to understand what had passed between the two. Several times she approached Xenia Pavlovna, and began:

"Why is all this quarreling going on in the house lately? What is the reason for it? Have you found out anything wrong about him, or what?"

"I have found out nothing!"

"Has he offended you in any way?"

"No, no, what makes you think so?"

"You do wrong to hide it from me. It will leak out somehow, do not fear. I shall find out everything, my lady!" Then she suddenly changed her tone and approached the matter from a different side:

"He is jealous. You should not provoke him."

"Oh, please don't! He is simply stupid, that is all!" Xenia Pavlovna interrupted her, laughing through her tears, and Maria Petrovna grew angry.

"If a wife speaks like that about her husband, no good will ever come of it!" And she began to defend her son-in-law with all her might, and in the end it appeared, according to her own words, that a better man than Ivan Mikhailovich could not be found the world over. "Just look at others, little mother! Take, for instance, the husband of Kapitolina Ivanovna! And it is nothing to her, my lady. She does not complain —she suffers in silence, and would not even think of dubbing her husband "stupid"—as you are doing. Of course, what we have we are careless of—and once we lose it—we cry!"

Nevertheless she could get no explanation of what had occurred, and could only take refuge in guesswork and suppostition.

She did not go to sleep till the return of her son-in-law, and, sitting in the drawing-room on the sofa, she continually pondered over what now most interested her, letting escape from time to time an "M'm."

And Ivan Mikhailovich, after he had supped and taken an extra glass or two, came home and announced himself by a ring so angry and imperious that it sounded noisily through the quiet rooms, and frightened Maria Petrovna. "He must be drunk," she thought, and, opening the door, she did not even sigh as usual, but spoke lovingly. "There is some supper left for you in the dining-room."

Ivan Mikhailovich did not reply. He passed through the rooms with protesting step, banged the doors, coughed loudly, and, in general, gave one to understand that he was his own master. And to still more emphasize his independence, he did not go to sleep in the superb double bed with its silver ornaments, but lay down on the sofa in his study under the reindeer antlers and the rifle from which he had never fired a shot.

"Here, take at least a pillow!" came Maria Petrovna's meek voice from the other side of the door, and the white corner of a pillow was thrust through the slightly open door of the study. Her son-in-law did not reply. "It is uncomfortable to lie that way, your neck will pain you."

"Don't you trouble yourself about my neck!" came from the cabinet.

But Maria Petrovna threw the pillow on an easy chair, and the door closed. Ivan Mikhailovich was a man who prided himself on the strength of his character, and, therefore, he did not take the pillow, but supported his head with his fist and puffed while he thought of the oppressive disagreeableness of married life.

The dog Norma evidently took the part of the husband, and whenever the couple quarreled and occupied different sleeping rooms, the dog would not stay with the woman.

Opening the door of the study with her paw, she approached the sofa, placed her black muzzle on Ivan Mikhailovich's breast, and gazed at him with eyes that wished to say: "What hags they are, all of them! They even do not know how to appreciate a man like you!" Ivan Mikhailovich felt a silent gratitude toward Norma, and patted her with his hand, pulling lovingly at her long ears. But the door of the study again opened slightly, and from the other side came the whisper of Maria Petrovna: "Norma! Norma!" But Norma did not go. Ivan Mikhailovich held her by the collar and patted her with redoubled energy. "She will let in fleas," again came the low voice. "Norma! Norma!"

Ivan Mikhailovich sprang from the sofa, closing the door tightly, and the melodious sound of the lock-spring ended the diplomatic overtures of his mother-in-law.

"Sleeps with the dog. A fine thing this!" spoke the grumbling voice behind the door, and all became quiet.

These were scenes with dramatic elements and effects in them. But there were other scenes of the ordinary sort, so to speak, without the dramatic effects, scenes which were repeated regularly in the same form and in the very same expressions.

These scenes always took place on the twentieth of the month, when Ivan Mikhailovich received his salary, and the large number of small creditors had to be paid. Somehow there was never sufficient money to settle all the bills, and each time Ivan Mikhailovich thought that the money ought to be enough to cover all expenses, and railed at the womenfolk who dreamed so much about the emancipation of women, while they did not even know how to regulate their own household. "Emancipation," he grumbled, taking the money from his pocket-book and throwing it on the table.

"But what has emancipation to do with this matter?"

"They go and teach you the devil-knows-what—all kinds of geography, algebra, trigonometry, but you do not know how to make both ends meet—emancipation!"

"And you should go a little less to the club, Ivan Mikhailovich; then probably the income would cover the expenditures!" replied Maria Petrovna, bitingly.

"And where, pray, can I get it for you? I am not coining money. I suppose you know I am not a counterfeiter?"

And all three started to upbraid and reproach each

other, and for a moment they became submerged in such trivialities and unpleasantness that they were afterward thoroughly ashamed of themselves. After every twentieth of the month there remained in the soul of Xenia Pavlovna a kind of soot, and this greasy soot dimmed her eyes, made her apathetic and slow, and it seemed as if she had all at once become old, ill-looking, and disheartened. This young and very charming woman looked at such times like a beautiful bouquet of flowers that had withered and been thrown out of the window. So they lived day after day, months and years, and when an acquaintance asked, "How are you getting along?" they invariably replied: "Very well, thank you!"

It sometimes became necessary to refresh themselves after this kind of life—to depart, at least for a day, from the beaten track—and so Ivan Mikhailovich went on a short spree two or three times a year. "One must overhaul himself thoroughly from time to time; it is not only useful, but also necessary," he usually said on the next day after such an exploit.

The only thing that ever brightened Xenia Pavlovna's life a little was going to the theatre. This happened so seldom, however, that she looked upon such rarely occurring occasions in the light of important events. Ivan Mikhailovich did not like to go to the theatre, and when Xenia Pavlovna said, "We ought to go to the theatre and refresh ourselves a little," Ivan Mikhailovich was sure to remember how, ten years before, when they visited St. Petersburg on their honeymoon, they had been to the opera and the drama,

and would reply: "After seeing Figner and Mme. Savina, it is not worth while, my dear, to go to see such small fry, and it only spoils an impression for us!"

But whenever "Faust" was presented on the stage of the local theatre, no pleadings were necessary: Ivan Mikhailovich never failed to take seats in the third row of the orchestra for himself and Xenia Pavlovna.

"To-day we go to see 'Faust,'" he said in an angry tone on returning from the bank, carelessly throwing two colored tickets upon the table.

"'Faust'?" joyfully exclaimed Xenia Pavlovna, and her face became radiant with joy.

Gay and exalted with the pleasure that awaited her, Xenia Pavlovna usually began to get ready very early. And while she was dressing and combing her hair, Ivan Mikhailovich stood close by to see that it was all done properly, because when he appeared with his wife in society he liked everything to be "just so," and was pleased to have every one think, as they saw her pass on his arm, "A charming woman that! Really charming!" Therefore he was a very stern critic, and while she dressed he continually vexed her by his remarks: "Your coiffure is too small! You have the face of a Marguerite, and you dress your hair to make you look like a Jewess!"

"It is not true!"

"A curious thing, really: women understand less than any one else what is becoming to them, and they care less than all to win the admiration of their husbands!"

Xenia Pavlovna also wished to look well, but she did not trust overmuch to the good taste of Ivan Mikhailovich, and at the same time she distrusted herself, too, and the upshot of it all was that they invariably quarreled, and left the house sulking and displeased with each other. Deeply aggravated and disheartened, they went to the theatre without any pleasurable anticipation, as if some one were driving them thither. First they walked arm in arm, feeling angry with each other, and longing to pull their arms away and walk apart; then Ivan Mikhailovich called a cabman in an angry voice that seemed to hate all the cabbies in the world. Having helped his wife into the sleigh, he sat down by her side and placed his arm around her waist. The whole way they never exchanged a word, but Ivan Mikhailovich gave vent to his irritation in a shower of abuse directed at the poor cabby: "Careful there! Don't you see the hollows, you stupid!"—"To the right, you dolt!"

The orchestra played the overture from "Faust." Ivan Mikhailovich and his wife walked arm in arm through the long, carpeted aisle between two long rows of orchestra chairs toward their seats. Ivan Mikhailovich felt as if all eyes were directed toward him, and he tried to walk with greater dignity, with his head proudly thrown back and his rounded paunch thrown forward. Xenia Pavlovna walked with downcast eyes and a face which looked rigidly cold and offended, as if she had been sentenced to die and were walking toward the gallows. The electric lights went out; the curtain rose upon a sea looking very much

like a sky and a sky very much like a sea, with some sort of fantastic ruins and tropical vegetation. The traditional Faust, in his brown dressing-gown, night-cap, and long, gray beard, sang in his metallic tenor voice, smoothing his beard with his hand:

"Accursed be human science, human prayer, human faith!"

At first Xenia Pavlovna was not much affected by either the music or the singing. She looked more than she listened. When the red Mephistopheles appeared and sang that everything was well with him, and that he had plenty of money, Xenia Pavlovna remembered that it would soon be the twentieth and that they owed the butcher for two months. "Emancipation!" she seemed to hear Ivan Mikhailovich exclaiming, and when she stopped thinking of the butcher and emancipation, Faust had already thrown off his dressing-gown and beard, and had changed from a decrepit old man into a handsome, strong youth, and this unexpectedness called forth the first smile upon her lips.

"To me returned lovely youth!" victoriously sang Faust, approaching the footlights and raising his hand, and Xenia Pavlovna began to think how old she was and how old Ivan Mikhailovich was; that their youth had already passed, and would nevermore return. Xenia Pavlovna sighed and stealthily glanced at Ivan Mikhailovich's face. He sat deep in his chair, with head bent to one side and his hands locked over his paunch, and in his well-groomed face, with its waxed and twisted mustaches, there was so much of that self-

sufficiency and well-bred sleekness of the native that Xenia Pavlovna hurriedly turned away.

During the first entr'acte they went into the lobby of the theatre, she leaning on his arm, and he feeling uneasy the whole time at the thought that his wife's hair was badly dressed and that her face was not alight with the joy and rapture of the other women, who, with their sparkling eyes and rustling skirts, laughed and talked incessantly in their ringing, happy voices.

After walking a little up and down the spacious lobby, engrossed in their own thoughts, the pair returned to their seats. Under the cascades of light falling from the electric lustre, the orchestra dazzled the eyes with the beautiful dresses of the ladies, and buzzed like a beehive from the multitude of noises, motions, and rustling, but this talk, glitter, and dazzle seemed to Xenia Pavlovna distant and strange, and the walls of people, the boxes resembling rich bouquets of flowers, awakened in her a feeling of loneliness and remoteness. She sat with her hands lying listlessly on her lap and with downcast eyes; she did not wish to be disturbed in her present brooding mood, and feared that some acquaintance might approach them and ask how they were, or that Ivan Mikhailovich might suddenly begin to compare the singers with those they had once heard.

When the lights went out and the curtain rose again, she felt a great relief, and it suddenly seemed to her that she was once more in her maiden bower and had locked the door on the outside world. Gazing

at the scene before her, she was gradually carried away into the realm of sound and melody, and wholly surrendered herself to the vague, disturbing emotions that had arisen in her soul under the influence of music and song. The rancor and vexation she had felt toward her husband gradually subsided, and the memory of the harsh wrangles, petty disputes, all the tiresome prosiness of her daily life, vanished, and an exquisite calm and tranquillity took possession of her soul, brightening and clearing up everything within her. In the third act the soul of Xenia Pavlovna flew away from her native town, and she forgot herself and everybody else, and wholly surrendered herself to the power of music and song, to the moonlit night, the silvery shimmer of the stars, and the contemplation of a happy love, which waxed stronger and stronger, seemingly measureless and all-powerful, but at the same time full of a sadness and pensiveness as quiet and gentle as this moonlit night itself, and as this exquisite young girl before her, with her thick, long braid of golden hair, who, with the sincerity and straightforwardness of a child, was kneeling before her handsome, youthful lover, pleading with him for mercy. Here she stands flooded by the radiant moonlight, trembling with fear and happiness, her head resting on the shoulder of the handsome youth. Here she sings at the wide-open window, telling the stars, the quiet night, and the slumbering old garden, that seems to have been enchanted by dreams of love, of her happiness; and her song, pure and sacred like a prayer, soars upward to the starry, blue heavens.

How very dear and near this is to people who have lived through the fantom of happiness. She, Xenia Pavlovna, had once been just such a sweet girl, with a thick, golden braid hanging down her back; she had been just as happy and carefree, and sang just as sweetly to the stars and the silent garden flooded with the mysterious, sad moonlight, and she also, just as this maiden, had trembled with fear and pleaded with the man she loved for mercy.

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!" rolled the thundering laugh of Mephistopheles—such pitiless, powerful, and provoking laughter—and the chord, which echoed in Xenia Pavlovna's heart with inexpressible tenderness and sadness, broke and grew silent, leaving room only for this laughter, oppressive and revolting in its triumphant triviality and truth. And reality suddenly broke into the realm of dreams and fancies. Xenia Pavlovna lowered her eyes, compressed her lips, and a smile passed over her face, the strange smile of a person who has been caught unawares.

"He laughs first rate!" remarked Ivan Mikhailovich in an earnest voice, slightly moving in his chair.

Xenia Pavlovna looked at her husband and sighed sorrowfully. She had already resigned herself to Ivan Mikhailovich, to his pompous solemnity, and his hands crossed over his paunch. Those hands no longer awakened her ire. Once this very same man who now sat by her side was *her* Faust, and with him was closely bound up her love-drama. Even if it had been a mirage, a mistake, it was the mistake of her

whole life, a mistake which would never be repeated —like youth itself.

The curtain came down. The noise of applause, resembling a rainstorm, and the wild roar of the over-enthusiastic gallery filled the theatre from top to bottom. The curtain rose once more on the sea and the ruins, and Faust, Marguerite, and Mephistopheles appeared holding each other's hands, bowing and smiling to the public, and Xenia Pavlovna felt as if she had been suddenly awakened from a sleep full of tender, delicious dreams, vague and enchanting, but already forgotten, and she felt vexed because she was awakened, and was now possessed by a tormenting longing to recall and bring back the frightened-off dreams.

She did not want to look at Marguerite, who had suddenly turned into an actress, thirsting for hand-clapping and making eyes at that huge monster—the public; at Mephistopheles, who stood with his right hand pressed to his breast as a token of gratitude and sincere pleasure, nor at Faust, who suddenly looked very much like a hair-dresser, and who was sending in all directions sweetish, airy kisses.

"Come, Vania!"

Ivan Mikhailovich rose and offered her his arm, and they once more repaired to the lobby. Here he treated her to tea and fruits. "It is splendid for allaying thirst!" he said, handing her an orange. And from this moment all animosity was forgotten, and peace reigned once more between them.

"Not sour, I hope?"

"No, it is very good."

Xenia Pavlovna ate her orange, and gazed at the men who passed them. "They are all different here from what they are at home," she thought; "they are all rude, all go to their clubs, and my Vania is in reality much better than many of these men."

"How did you like Marguerite, Vania?"

"Pretty well—though, after Alma Fostrem, she is, of course—"

"Have you heard Alma in that rôle?"

"Well, I like that, really! Did we not hear her together at St. Petersburg! Have you forgotten already?"

"Ach, that was so long ago."

"Though this opera is immortal by itself, I have seen it over a hundred times, and will be glad to see it as many times more. Here one sees life as in a mirror— Yes— Do you remember—in the garden?" he concluded in a low voice, leaning toward his wife.

Xenia Pavlovna's face was covered with a slight blush, and her eyes had a thoughtful, far-away look in them, which gradually grew sad and dreamy.

"All this was, but it has passed as if in a dream," her lips whispered, and her head swayed on her beautiful bare neck.

Here some acquaintances passed and, pressing their hands warmly, inquired:

"How are you?"

"Very well, thank you. And you?"

"Pretty well, as usual. But you, Xenia Pavlovna, still continue to grow more beautiful!"

Xenia Pavlovna blushed, and a hardly perceptible

shade of pleasure flitted over her face, and made it sweet and strong and proud.

"What are you saying!" she replied, slightly screwing up her eyes and coquettishly fanning herself. "On the contrary, I think I am growing worse looking with each passing day!"

Then all the men began to protest in chorus, and the women silently fixed their coiffures with their fingers, while Ivan Mikhailovich looked at his wife and thought that she was really a very lovely woman, probably one of the loveliest in the whole theatre, and he also began to feel very pleased, and twirling his mustaches, he spoke proudly:

"You ought to see her portrait when she was my fiancée! It hangs over my desk. She had a braid twice as thick as this Marguerite's—"

In the last scene a whole revolution took place in the soul of Ivan Mikhailovich. He began to imagine Xenia Pavlovna overtaken by the sad fate of Marguerite, and himself in the rôle of Faust, and grew very sorry for Xenia Pavlovna. The gloomy arches of the prison, on the gray stone floor some straw, and on it this woman, outraged, criminal, insane, and nevertheless so pure and saintly; the low melodies so full of sadness and tenderness in which arose hazy memories of past happiness, made Ivan Mikhailovich's breath come faster. He looked at Xenia Pavlovna, and noticing tears in her eyes, felt that this woman was very dear to him and that he was somehow very guilty toward her.

Ivan Mikhailovich sadly gazed upon the stage, lis-

tened to the low strains of music, and it seemed to him at times that it was his Xenia thrown into prison, and he recalled how they first met at a ball and how he at the conclusion of it sang: "Amidst the noisy ball," and how they afterward sat in the dark garden listening to the singing of the nightingale and gazing at the silvery stars.

All this was, but it had passed as if in a dream.

They returned from the theatre with souls refreshed, overfilled with sadness mingled with joy, and it seemed to both as if all their former disputes and frictions over trivialities had vanished forevermore, and a part of their former happiness had returned to them. They rode home dashingly in a light, new sleigh over the well-beaten road, and Ivan Mikhailovich had his arm round Xenia Pavlovna's waist as tightly as if he feared to lose her on the way. Xenia Pavlovna hid her face in the soft white fur of her collar, and only her sparkling eyes were visible from under a very becoming little hat of the same white fur, like two coals, dark and moist.

Ivan Mikhailovich wished to kiss her, forgetting that they were in the open road, but Xenia Pavlovna screwed up her eyes, in which lurked silent laughter, and slightly shook her white fur hat.

At home the samovar and Maria Petrovna awaited them.

The samovar gurgled joyfully, rising importantly in all its beauty and sparkle from the snow-white of the tablecloth; the nice white loaves of bread smelt good and very tempting; and fresh, soft-boiled eggs

seemed just waiting to be cracked over the nose with a spoon. And Maria Petrovna, sailing out of the nursery with her old wrap over her shoulders, spoke kindly: "Well, children, you must be quite hungry?"

Ivan Mikhailovich did not reply. He entered the dimly lighted salon and paced it with a slow tread, smoothed his hair with the palm of his hand and purred: "Angel, Angel Marguerite!"

Then he returned to the dining-room, approached Xenia Pavlovna, silently kissed her on the head, and again went into the salon, where he continued purring.

"You had better eat and leave 'Angel Marguerite' for after," said Maria Petrovna, thrusting her head into the doorway of the salon.

"In a moment! In a moment!" Ivan Mikhailovich replied with vexation, and continued walking, wholly surrendering himself to vague emotions and recollections and the feeling of tender sadness for the past.

Afterward they all three had tea and spoke very amiably, and a good and peaceful feeling filled their hearts. Xenia Pavlovna changed her evening dress for a white capote with sleeves resembling wings, and let down her hair. She visited the nursery several times, and, sinking on her knees before the three little beds, she gazed with a mother's passion and tenderness at the sleeping babies with their full, chubby little arms and sweet, care-free faces, and it seemed to her that here were sleeping the little angels, pure, gentle, helpless, and great in their purity, that had carried Marguerite into heaven.

"You look like Marguerite in prison," remarked her

husband, leaning on his arm and gazing at his wife long and attentively, and it seemed to him as if a whole chapter of his life had disappeared and before him was a sweet, young maiden with golden hair, whom one longed to love, to adore forever.

And under this glance Xenia Pavlovna lowered her eyes, smiled, and felt that somewhere far down at the very bottom of her soul the broken, unfinished song of her youthful heart sounded like a mountain echo.

Ivan Mikhailovich who, generally supping at home in his shirt-sleeves, now felt constrained to take off his coat, endeavored to lend to his gestures and motions as much elegance and grace as possible, and was amiable and courteous at table, even to his mother-in-law.

"Shall I hand you the butter?" he asked, anticipating her wish.

"You are acting just as if you had come on a visit," Maria Petrovna remarked, and, taking the butter with a pleasant smile, said: "Merci!"

"Well, good night, my Marguerite!" said Ivan Mikhailovich, approaching his wife and once more gazing attentively into her eyes; then he kissed her hand and cheek.

"Good night, my Faust!" jokingly replied Xenia Pavlovna, kissing her husband on the lips.

Then Ivan Mikhailovich pressed Maria Petrovna's hand and went into the bedroom.

The blue hanging-lamp flooded the chamber with a soft, tender, soothing, bluish light, and it was so peace-

ful and cozy. Ivan Mikhailovich undressed, and, taking off his boots, still continued to sing from "Faust" in a tender falsetto:

"'Tis life alone to be near thee,
Thine only, all thine own!"

THE DUEL

BY NIKOLAI DMITRIEVITCH TELESHOV

Teleshov was born in 1867 and studied at the Moscow Academy of Applied Sciences. He started on his literary career in 1884 and met with almost immediate recognition.

In his choice of subjects, as well as in the strong objective way in which he treats them, Teleshov is a disciple of Anton Chekhov, and his affinity with that great artist has been pointed out by the foremost Russian critics.

Unlike some of the other younger Russian writers, Teleshov is wholly sound, sympathetic, and gentle in his writings. He takes his subjects wherever he can most easily lay his hand upon them—in the petty, gray, every-day life of the tradesman or from among the loose, unrestrained half-Bohemianism which is found in every great city.

THE DUEL

BY NIKOLAI TELESHOV

IT was early morning—

Vladimir Kladunov, a tall, graceful young man, twenty-two years of age, almost boyish in appearance, with a handsome face and thick, fair curls, dressed in the uniform of an officer and in long riding boots, minus overcoat and cap, stood upon a meadow covered with new-fallen snow, and gazed at another officer, a tall, red-faced, mustached man, who faced him at a distance of thirty paces, and was slowly lifting his hand in which he held a revolver, and aimed it straight at Vladimir.

With his arms crossed over his breast and also holding in one hand a revolver, Kladunov, almost with indifference, awaited the shot of his opponent. His handsome, young face, though a little paler than usual, was alight with courage, and wore a scornful smile. His dangerous position, and the merciless determination of his adversary, the strenuous attention of the seconds who silently stood at one side, and the imminence of death, made the moment one of terrible intensity—mysterious, almost solemn. A question of honor was to be decided. Every one felt the importance of the question; the less they understood what they were doing, the deeper seemed the solemnity of the moment.

Translated by Lizzie B. Gorin. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

A shot was fired; a shiver ran through all. Vladimir threw his hands about, bent his knees, and fell. He lay upon the snow, shot through the head, his hands apart, his hair, face, and even the snow around his head covered with blood. The seconds ran toward him and lifted him; the doctor certified his death, and the question of honor was solved. It only remained to announce the news to the regiment and to inform, as tenderly and carefully as possible, the mother, who was now left alone in the world, for the boy that had been killed was her only son. Before the duel no one had given her even a thought; but now they all became very thoughtful. All knew and loved her, and recognized the fact that she must be prepared by degrees for the terrible news. At last Ivan Golubenko was chosen as most fit to tell the mother, and smooth out matters as much as possible.

. . . . . .

Pelageia Petrovna had just risen, and was preparing her morning tea when Ivan Golubenko, gloomy and confused, entered the room.

"Just in time for tea, Ivan Ivanovich!" amiably exclaimed the old lady, rising to meet her guest. "You have surely called to see Vladimir!"

"No, I—in passing by—" Golubenko stammered, abashed.

"You will have to excuse him, he is still asleep. He walked up and down his room the whole of last night, and I told the servant not to wake him, as it is a—holy day. But probably you came on urgent business?"

"No, I only stepped in for a moment in passing—"

"If you wish to see him, I will give the order to wake him up."

"No, no, do not trouble yourself!"

But Pelageia Petrovna, believing that he had called to see her son on some business or other, left the room, murmuring to herself.

Golubenko walked excitedly to and fro, wringing his hands, not knowing how to tell her the terrible news. The decisive moment was quickly approaching, but he lost control of himself, was frightened, and cursed fate that had so mixed him up with the whole business.

"Now! How can a body trust you young people!" good-naturedly exclaimed Pelageia Petrovna to her guest, reentering the room. "Here I have been taking care not to make the least noise with the cups and saucers, and asking you not to wake my boy, and he has long ago departed without leaving a trace! But why do you not take a seat, Ivan Ivanovich, and have a cup of tea? You have been neglecting us terribly lately!"

She smiled as with a secret joy, and added in a low voice:

"And we have had so much news during that time!— Vladimir surely could not keep it. He must have told you all about it by this; for he is very straightforward and open-hearted, my Vladimir. I was thinking last night, in my sinful thoughts: 'Well, when my Vladimir paces the room the whole night— that means that he is dreaming of Lenochka!' That

is always the case with him: if he paces the room the whole night, he will surely leave to-morrow— Ah, Ivan Ivanovich, I only ask the Lord to send me this joy in my old age. What more does an old woman need? I have but one desire, one joy—and it seems to me I shall have nothing more to pray for after Vladimir and Lenochka are married. So joyful and happy it would make me!— I do not need anything besides Vladimir; there is nothing dearer to me than his happiness."

The old lady became so effected that she had to wipe away the tears which came to her eyes.

"Do you remember," she continued, "things did not go well in the beginning—either between the two or on account of the money— You young officers are not even allowed to marry without bonds— Well, now everything has been arranged: I have obtained the necessary five thousand rubles for Vladimir, and they could go to the altar even to-morrow! Yes, and Lenochka has written such a lovely letter to me— My heart is rejoicing!"

Continuing to speak, Pelageia Petrovna took a letter out of her pocket, which she showed to Golubenko, and then put back again.

"She is such a dear girl! And so good!"

Ivan Golubenko, listening to her talk, sat as if on red-hot coals. He wanted to interrupt her flow of words, to tell her that everything was at an end, that her Vladimir was dead, and that in one short hour nothing would remain to her of all her bright hopes; but he listened to her and kept silent. Looking upon

her good, gentle face, he felt a convulsive gripping in his throat.

"But why are you looking so gloomy to-day?" the old lady at last asked. "Why, your face looks as black as night!"

Ivan wanted to say "Yes! And yours will be the same when I tell you!" but instead of telling her anything, he turned his head away, and began to twirl his mustaches.

Pelageia Petrovna did not notice it, and, wholly absorbed in her own thoughts, continued:

"I have a greeting for you. Lenochka writes that I should give Ivan Ivanovich her regards, and should compel him to come with Vladimir and pay her a visit— You know yourself how she likes you, Ivan Ivanovich!— No, it seems I am not able to keep it to myself. I must show you the letter. Just see for yourself how loving and sweet it is."

And Pelageia Petrovna again took out the package of letters from her pocket, took from it a thin letter-sheet, closely written, and unfolded it before Ivan Golubenko, whose face had become still gloomier, and he tried to push away with his hand the extended note, but Pelageia Petrovna had already started to read:

"Dear Pelageia Petrovna—When will the time arrive when I will be able to address you, not as above, but as my dear, sweet mother! I am anxiously awaiting the time, and hope so much that it will soon come that even now I do not want to call you otherwise than mama—"

Pelageia Petrovna lifted her head, and, ceasing to

read, looked at Golubenko with eyes suffused with tears.

"You see, Ivan Ivanovich!" she added; but seeing that Golubenko was biting his mustaches, and that his eyes too were moist, she rose, placed a trembling hand upon his hair, and quietly kissed him on the forehead. "Thank you, Ivan Ivanovich," she whispered, greatly moved. "I always thought that you and Vladimir were more like brothers than like simple friends—Forgive me—I am so very happy, God be thanked!"

Tears streamed down her cheeks, and Ivan Golubenko was so disturbed and confused that he could only catch in his own her cold, bony hand and cover it with kisses; tears were suffocating him, and he could not utter a word, but in this outburst of motherly love he felt such a terrible reproach to himself that he would have preferred to be lying himself upon the field, shot through the head, than to hear himself praised for his friendship by this woman who would in half an hour find out the whole truth; what would she then think of him? Did not he, the friend, the almost brother, stand quietly by when a revolver was pointed at Vladimir? Did not this brother himself measure the space between the two antagonists and load the revolvers? All this he did himself, did consciously; and now this friend and brother silently sat there without having even the courage to fulfil his duty.

He was afraid; at this moment he despised himself, but could not prevail upon himself to say even one word. His soul was oppressed by a strange lack of

harmony; he felt sick at heart and stifling. And in the meanwhile time flew—he knew it, and the more he knew it the less had he the courage to deprive Pelageia Petrovna of her few last happy moments. What should he say to her? How should he prepare her? Ivan Golubenko lost his head entirely.

He had had already time enough to curse in his thoughts all duels, all quarrels, every kind of heroism, and all kinds of so-called questions of honor, and he at last rose from his seat ready to confess or to run away. Silently and quickly he caught the hand of Pelageia Petrovna, and stooping over it to touch it with his lips, thus hid his face, over which a torrent of tears suddenly streamed down; impetuously, without another thought, he ran out into the corridor, snatching his great coat, and then out of the house without having said a word.

Pelageia Petrovna looked after him with astonishment, and thought:

"He also must be in love, poor fellow— Well, that is their young sorrow—before happiness!" . . .

And she soon forgot him, absorbed in her dreams of the happiness which seemed to her so inviolable and entire.

BOLESS

BY MAXIM GORKI

Alexei Maximovitch Pyeshkov, otherwise "Gorki," or the "Bitter One," was born in 1868, in the house of his grandfather, the dyer Kaschirin. A shoemaker's apprentice at five years of age, his life has been a continued series of experiments and struggles—at one time gardener, at another, painter of icons, scullery boy on a Volga steamship, shoemaker, sawyer of wood, apple-seller, baker, and railroad porter. His first pictures of the life of the under-dog, based on his own experiences, were so masterly that he became in a surprisingly short time one of the most popular of Russian authors.

BOLESS

BY MAXIM GORKI

AN acquaintance of mine once told me the following story:

"While still a student at Moscow I happened to be living alongside one of those—well, she was a Polish woman, Teresa by name. A tall, powerfully built brunette with heavy, bushy eyebrows, and a large coarse, vulgar face, as if carved out with an ax—the animal gleam of her eyes, the deep bass voice, the gait and manners of a cabman, and her immense strength like that of a market-woman, inspired me with an inexpressible horror. I lived in the garret of the house, and her room was opposite mine. I never opened my door when I knew that she was in. But this, of course, happened very rarely. Sometimes I chanced to meet her on the landing, staircase, or in the yard, and she would look at me with a smile which seemed to me cynical and rapacious. Occasionally I saw her in her cups, with bleary eyes, her hair and clothes in disorder and with a particularly loathsome smile. On such occasions she would meet my eye with an impudent stare and say:

"'How are you, Pan Student?' [1]

---

[1] Pan is Polish for Mister.

Translated by Lizzie B. Gorin. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

"And her stupid laugh would increase my dislike for her still more. I would have liked nothing better than to change my quarters in order to get rid of her proximity, but my room was so nice, and the view from my window was so fine, the street below so quiet and peaceful, that I concluded to endure it.

"One morning after I had dressed and was sprawling on the cot, trying to invent some sort of an excuse for not attending my classes, the door of my room suddenly opened, and the disgusting bass voice of the Polish woman sounded from the threshold:

" 'Good morning, Pan Student!'

" 'What is it you wish?' I asked her. I saw she looked confused and had in her face a kind of pleading expression, something unusual with her.

" 'You see, Pan Student, I came to beg you to do me a great favor. Don't refuse me, please!'

"Lying there on my cot I thought that it was just some pretext or other to make my further acquaintance. Take care, my boy!

" 'You see, I have to send a letter to my native country,' she continued in a supplicating, low, tremulous voice.

" 'Well,' I thought, 'the devil take you. If you wish I will write it for you.' And springing to my feet I sat down to the table, took some paper and said: 'Well, come nearer; sit down and dictate.'

"She came over; sat down cautiously on the edge of the chair and looked at me in rather a guilty way.

" 'To whom shall I write?'

" 'To Boleslav Kapshat, in the town Sventsiani, on the Warsaw railroad.'

" 'Well, what shall I write? Speak.'

" 'My dearest Boless, my heart's delight, my beloved. May the Mother of God protect you! My golden heart, why have you not written for so long a time to your sorrowing dove, Teresa—'

"I could hardly keep from laughing. A sorrowing dove, indeed! Almost six feet tall, with the fists of a prize-fighter, and a face so black that it seemed as if the 'dove' had been sweeping chimneys all her life and had never thoroughly washed herself. But I somehow kept my face straight and asked:

" 'Who is this Bolesst?'

" 'Boless, Pan Student,' she replied seemingly offended because of my mispronouncing the name. 'He is my affianced.'

" 'Affianced!'

" 'And why are you so astonished? Can not I, a girl, have an affianced?'

"She—a girl! well, this beats everything I ever heard. Oh, well, who can tell about such matters! Everything is possible in this world.

" 'And have you been long engaged?'

" 'The sixth year.'

" 'Oh, oh!' I thought and then said aloud: 'Well, go ahead with your letter.'

"And I must confess—so tender and loving was this message—that I would have willingly exchanged places with this Boless had the fair correspondent been any one else but Teresa.

"'I thank you from my inmost soul for your favor, Pan Student,' Teresa said, bowing low. 'Can I in any way be of service to you?'

"'No, thank you.'

"'But maybe the Pan's shirts or trousers need mending?'

"This made me quite angry. I felt that this mastodon in petticoats was making the blood mount to my cheeks, and I told her quite sharply that her services were not required; and she departed.

"Two weeks or so passed. One evening I was sitting at my window, softly whistling and thinking hard how to get away from myself. I felt very bored. The weather was as nasty as it could be. To go out that evening was out of the question, and having nothing better to do I began from sheer ennui a course of self-analysis. This proved dull enough work, but there was nothing else to do. Suddenly the door opened, thank God! Some one was coming to see me.

"'Are you very busy just now, Pan Student?'

"'Teresa! H'm—' I thought I would have preferred any one at all to her. Then I said aloud:

"'No, what is it you want now?'

"'I wish to ask the Pan Student to write me another letter.'

"'Very well. Is it again to Boless you wish me to write?'

"'No, this time I want you to write a letter from Boless to me.'

"'Wha-at?'

"'I beg your pardon, Pan Student. How stupid of

me! It is not for me, this letter, but for a friend of mine, a man acquaintance; he has a fiancée. Her name is like mine, Teresa. He does not know how to write, so I want the Pan Student to write for him a letter to that Teresa—'

"I looked at her. She seemed very confused and frightened, and her fingers trembled. And though I failed at first to understand what was the matter with her I at last understood.

" 'Look here, my lady,' I said to her. 'You have been telling me a pack of lies. There are no Bolesses nor Teresas among your acquaintances. It is only a pretext for coming in here. I tell you outright that there is no use of coming sneaking around me, as I do not wish to have anything to do with you. Do you understand?'

"She grew very red in the face and I saw that she was strangely frightened and confused, and moved her lips so oddly, wishing to say something, without being able to say it. And somehow I began to think that I had misjudged her a little. There was something behind all this. But what?

" 'Pan Student,' she suddenly began, but broke off, and turning toward the door walked out of the room.

"I remained with a very unpleasant feeling in my heart. I heard her shut her own door with a bang; evidently the poor girl was very angry—I thought the matter over and decided to go in to her and induce her to return; I would write her the letter she wished.

"I entered her room. She was sitting at the table with her head pressed in her hands.

" 'Teresa,' I said, 'will you listen to me a moment?'

"Whenever I come to this turn of the story I always feel very awkward and embarrassed. But let us return to my narrative. Seeing that she did not reply I repeated:

" 'Listen to me, my girl—'

"She sprang to her feet, came close up to me, with eyes flashing, and placing her two hands on my shoulders she began to whisper, or rather to hum in her deep bass voice:

" 'Look you here, Pan Student. What of it, what of it if there is no Boless? And what if there is no Teresa? What difference does it make to you? Is it so hard for you to draw a few lines on the paper! Oh, you! And I thought you such a good fellow, such a nice fair-haired little boy. Yes, it is true—there is no Boless, and there is no Teresa, there is only me! Well, what of it?'

" 'Allow me,' I said greatly disconcerted by this reception. 'What is it you are saying? Is there no Boless?'

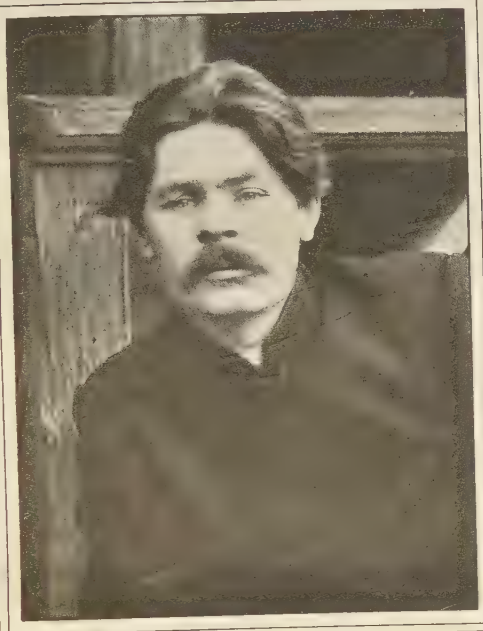
" 'Yes, there is none. But what of it?'

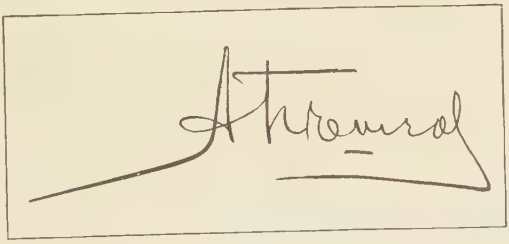
" 'And no Teresa either?'

" 'No, no Teresa either; that is, yes, I am her.'

"I could not understand a word. I stared straight into her eyes, trying to determine which of us two had lost our reason. And she returned once more to the table, rummaged for some time in the drawer, and coming back to me said in an offended tone:

" 'Here is the letter you wrote for me, take it back. You do not wish to write me a second one anyway.





Maxim Gorki

Others will probably be kinder than you and would do so.'

"I recognized the letter she held out to me as the one I wrote for her to Boless. Humph!

" 'Look here, Teresa,' I said to her. 'Will you please explain to me what it all means? Why do you ask people to write letters for you when you do not find it necessary even to post them?'

" 'Post them? Where to?'

" 'Why, to this Boless, of course.'

" 'But he does not exist!'

"I really could not understand a word. There was nothing left for me to do but to spit and walk out of the room. But she explained herself.

" 'Well, what of it?' she began in an offended voice. 'He does not exist. He does not, so,' and she extended her hands as if she could not herself clearly understand why he did not exist in reality. 'But I want him to. Am I not as much of a human being as the others? Of course I—I know— But it does no harm to any one, that I am writing to him—'

" 'Allow me—to whom?'

" 'To Boless, of course.'

" 'But he does not exist.'

" 'Oh, Mother of God! What if he does not exist? He does not; still to me he does. And Teresa—this is myself, and he replies to my letters, and I write to him again.'

"I understood. I felt so sick at heart, so ashamed of myself to know that alongside of me, only three paces removed, lived a human being who had no one in the

whole world to love and sympathize with her, and that this being had to invent a friend for herself.

" 'Here you have written a letter from me to Boless, and I gave it to another to read, and when I hear it read it really begins to seem to me as if there is a Boless. And then I ask that a letter be written from Boless to Teresa—that is to me. And when such a letter is written and is read to me then I am almost entirely convinced that there is a Boless, and that makes my life easier.'

"Yes, the devil take it all," continued my acquaintance. "To make a long story short I began from that time on to write with the greatest punctuality twice a week letters to Boless and vice versa. I wrote splendid replies to her. She used to listen to my reading of those epistles and to weep in her bass voice. In return for this she used to mend my clothes and darn my socks.

"Three months later she was thrown into prison for some reason or other and by now she must surely be dead."

My acquaintance blew the ashes from his cigarette, looked thoughtfully at the sky, and concluded:

"Y-e-s, the more a human being has drunk of the cup of bitterness the more ardently he longs for sweetness. And we, enveloped in our worn-out virtues and gazing at each other through the haze of self-sufficiency and convinced of our righteousness, fail to understand it.

"And the whole affair turns out very stupid, and very cruel. Fallen people we say—but who and what

are those fallen ones? First of all they are human beings of the very same bone and blood, of the very same flesh and nerves as ourselves. We have been told the very same thing for whole ages, day in and day out. And we listen and—and the devil alone knows how stupid it all is! In reality we, too, are but fallen people and more deeply fallen too, probably—into the abyss of self-sufficiency, convinced of our own sinlessness and superiority, the superiority of our own nerves and brains over the nerves and brains of those who are only less crafty than we are, and who can not, as we can, feign a goodness they do not possess—but enough of this. It is all so old and stale—so old and stale indeed that one is ashamed to speak of it—"

THE LOVE OF A SCENE-PAINTER

BY "SKITALITZ"

"Skitalitz," meaning "wanderer," is the nom de plume of a very talented young author by the name of A. Petrov. He is about 36 years old and a native of Nijni-Novgorod. Students of Russian literature have generally thought "Skitalitz" to be a nom de plume of Leonid Andreiev, but that is incorrect. Nearly all his works have been published by the "Znaniye" Company, which is backed by Gorki, and which until lately was the standard of Russian literature. "Skitalitz" writes poetry as well as prose. His works have been translated into the chief European languages, English included.

THE LOVE OF A SCENE-PAINTER

BY "SKITALITZ"

THE scene-painter Kostovsky had gone on a spree just at a time when he should not have done so: preparations were afoot for the presentation of a spectacular play, the success of which wholly depended upon the beauty of the decorations. The posters were already scattered all over the city; it was necessary to hurry forward the different arrangements and to paint the new scenery, and now something happened that the stage-manager had feared all along: Kostovsky went on a spree.

This always occurred just at a time when he was indispensable. As if an evil spirit prompted him just at such time and the forbidden liquid became more tempting than ever, he felt an unconquerable longing to experience a feeling of guilt, to act against the will of every one, against his own interests, but certainly not against the promptings of the Evil One, who had, for the time being, wholly taken possession of him.

His impetuous nature, full of talent, could not exist, it seemed, without powerful impressions—and he found them only in carousing. The days of revelry were for him always full of interesting encounters and strange adventures peculiar only to himself. But

Translated by Lizzie B. Gorin. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

as soon as he came to his senses and sobered up, he took to his work with a sort of furious energy: everything around him at such times was at a fever-heat of excitement and he himself was burning with the fire of inspiration. Only because he was a wonderful scene-painter, a genius of his craft, he was not discharged. He hurt the reputation of the company with his scandals, adventures, and careless, soiled dress, his whole plebeian appearance; but for all that, from under his brush came the most exquisite, artistically executed decorations, for which the public often called the "decorator" before the curtain, and about which the press remarked afterward.

Behind the scenes the members of the company kept aloof from Kostovsky, and no one wanted to be on intimate terms with him; the chorus-singers "drank," too, but considered themselves of a higher breed than the workman-decorator, and did not want him in their society, and the chorus-girls and ballet-dancers treated him like some sexless being, kept aloof from him, and looked at him with a grimace of disgust. He, on his part, also took little interest in them.

He admired only Julia, a little ballet-dancer, and even her he loved only as an artist, when she danced on the stage enveloped in the electric rays of the reflector which he himself manipulated. He liked the turn of her pretty little head, and he admired her, distinguishing her in the crowd of the other ballet-dancers by an exceptionally bright ray. "In life" he never spoke to her, and she pretended that she did not notice his attentions at all.

Living in a strange solitude, without love or friends, not having the sympathy of any one in the company, but being at the same time "indispensable" to it, he experienced an immeasurable feeling of "offense," and caroused, as happened now when he was so badly "needed."

The stout stage-manager stood on the stage after the rehearsal and spoke about Kostovsky with the business-manager of the troupe, an elegant, dark-complexioned man of the Hebrew type.

The broad, fat face of the stage-manager expressed restrained wrath, anxiety, and sorrow.

"Well, just tell me, please," he spoke tearfully, while in his heart a storm was raging, "what am I to do now? What am I to do n-o-w?"

And, crossing his fat hands helplessly on his paunch, he wrathfully and sorrowfully looked at his companion.

"Hoggishness, that is all!" replied the business-manager. "He started to drink on the steamer when we were coming here and has not sobered up yet. And do you know, he fell into the sea on the way here! That was a joke. I was suddenly awakened by the cry: 'Man overboard!' I sprang to my feet. 'Who is it?' 'Kostovsky!' 'Ah, Kostovsky, and I thought it was—some one else!' And I again went to bed as if nothing had happened, because, in my opinion, Kostovsky is not a man, but a pig."

"How did he come to fall into the water? Was he drunk?"

"Of course he must have been drunk. He fell

asleep on the deck and was forgotten. The vessel lurched and he rolled over."

"Ho-ho-ho!" the stage-manager's deep laugh rang out.

"He-he-he!" chorused the business-manager in his thin, piping laugh. "But what is still funnier, the sea would have none of him, and he was fished out even before he had time to become entirely awake. A wonderful accident, really! The sea even refused to swallow such a rascal!"

"But where is he now?" inquired the stage-manager after he had ceased laughing, and a little softened by the story of Kostovsky's mishap at sea.

"Here. He is sobering up a little in the wardrobe. They searched for him all over town, and at last they found the darling in a tavern engaged in a hot battle with some apprentice; they did not even allow him to finish the fistic argument, but pulled them apart, and brought him here. Now he is nursing a beautiful black eye."

"Bring him in here, the rascal."

The young man ran briskly across the stage and vanished behind the scenes. And immediately the empty theatre loudly resounded with his piping voice:

"Kostovsky! Kostovsky!"

"He will come at once," the man said on returning, and winked his eye as if wishing to say: "The comedy will start immediately."

A slow, unsteady step was heard approaching, and upon the stage appeared the man who had caused so

much bad blood and ill-feeling and whom the sea would not accept.

He was of middle height, sinuous, muscular, and slightly round-shouldered, dressed in a coarse blue blouse full of paint spots and girded by a leather strap; his trousers, bespattered with paint, he wore tucked into his tall boots. Kostovsky had the appearance of a common workman, with long, muscular hands like those of a gorilla, and probably of great strength; his far from good-looking but very characteristic face, with its prominent cheek-bones and long, reddish mustaches, breathed of power. From under knitted brows gloomily, and at the same time good-naturedly, looked out a pair of large blue eyes. The main peculiarity of this face was an expression of impetuousness and energy; his left eye was embellished by a large discoloration—the mark of a well-aimed blow—and his coarse, reddish locks bristled out rebelliously in all directions. On the whole, Kostovsky impressed one as a bold, untamable being.

He bowed, at once shamefacedly and proudly, and did not offer any one his hand.

"What are you up to now, Kostovsky? Eh?" the stage-manager spoke in a freezingly cold manner. "The play is announced for to-morrow and we shall have to revoke it! What are you doing me all this injury for? Is it honest of you? Why are you drinking? Just look what an ornament you have under the eye! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Kostovsky took a step backward, thrust his long

fingers through his locks, and suddenly became alight with a passionate, indomitable emotion:

"Mark Lukich!" he exclaimed in a dull, husky, but convincing voice: "I drank! That is true! But now —basta! I will make everything necessary! To-day is Saturday and there is no performance, I shall not go out of here till to-morrow! I shall work the whole night through! I! I— Ach, thou great God!"

Kostovsky waved his hands in the air, and it seemed that he was suddenly possessed with a desperate energy. He longed for work as for expiation.

"But do you understand what there is to be done? Entirely new scenery must be painted. And painted good! Do you understand? Painted g-o-o-d!"

"I shall paint it well, no fear of that!" exclaimed Kostovsky enthusiastically, once more running all his ten fingers through his coarse locks. After musingly pacing the stage for some moments, he stopped before the stage-manager.

"Please tell me all about it, what sort of scenery is wanted, and for what it is needed," he said in a more calm voice.

"You see, this will be the second act. Two people are lost in the steppe at night. The place must be a dull, obscure wilderness, a terrible fear possesses them, and supernatural things take place there. You must paint for us this steppe; everything must be in it: the impression of remoteness, the darkness and clouds, and so vividly that a shiver of dread should run through the public."

"That is enough!" interrupted Kostovsky. "I shall

paint you the steppe. I will work the whole night on the stage by lamplight and to-morrow everything will be ready. Have you the necessary material?"

"Everything is ready, all that is necessary is to work!" put in the business-manager.

But Kostovsky already felt the inspiration of the decorator. He turned away from his superiors, no longer even aware of their presence, and, standing in the centre of the stage, he shouted in a powerful, imperious voice:

"Here, Pavel, hurry there! Vanka, here with you! Lively there, you sons of the devil, Kostovsky means to work now!"

The stage-workman Pavel and the apprentice Vanka, a nimble, slouchy fellow, passionately devoted to the stage, came rushing in and immediately began to bustle about, spreading the enormous canvas and bringing forward the paints and brushes.

"Well," said the business-manager to the stage-manager, "thank God, he has come to his senses at last; we will not be compelled now to revoke the play! Let us go and have our dinner. He must not be interfered with now."

The whole night the stage was brightly illuminated, and in the empty theatre reigned the quiet of the grave. Only the tread of Kostovsky could be heard as, with his long brush in his hand, he continually approached and retreated from his canvas; all around stood pails and pots of paint.

He made rapid strides in his work. With a blue mark under his eye, dirty with paint, with

bristling hair and mustaches, he accomplished with his enormous brush a titanic kind of work. His eyes were ablaze and his face looked inspired. He created.

At eleven o'clock in the morning the whole company, which had gathered for the rehearsal, stood agape before the creation of Kostovsky. The actors, chorus-singers, male and female, and the ballet-dancers gazed at the enormous canvas from the stage and afterward from the orchestra, and freely expressed their opinions. The whole background of the stage was occupied by the gigantic picture. It was the steppe. On the edge it was overgrown with tall, dense burdocks and other steppe-grass, farther could be seen a desolate-looking steppe-grave, thickly overgrown with grass, and still farther unrolled the cheerless, dull steppe with a wonderful, immeasurable perspective, a steppe out of the fairy-tales, out of the times of knighthood—pathless and unpeopled. It seemed to the onlookers that suddenly the famous Knight of the Russian fairy-tale, Ilia Muromets, would appear from behind the mound and would bawl out: "Is there a live man in this field?" But the bleak steppe was silent, terribly, gloomily silent; looming up against the sky were dark grave-mounds, and sinister, black, bushy clouds were gathering. There was no end to these clouds and grave-mounds, and the measureless vista of this steppe. The whole picture breathed gloom and oppressed the soul. It seemed as if something terrible would immediately take place, that the grave-mounds and the clouds had a symbolic meaning, that they were in a way animated. True, when one stepped up too

close to Kostovsky's scenery he could not make out anything: he saw before him a mere daub and splash made with the large brush—hasty, bold strokes, and nothing more. But the farther the spectator retreated from the canvas the clearer appeared the picture of the enormous steppe, spiritualized by a powerful mood, and the more attentively he looked at it, all the more was he possessed by the feeling of uncanny dread.

"Well, what do you say to this!" hummed the crowd. "Devilish fellow, Kostovsky! A real talent! Just see what deviltry he has let loose!"

"Well, that is nothing!" he replied naively. "We are simple workmen: when we work we work, but when once we are bent on having a good time we take our fill—that is how we are!"

They all laughed at him, but they spoke about him the whole day: he had never succeeded so well as at this time.

And he continued at his work; it seemed as if his energy had only just now become aroused. While the rehearsal was going on, he painted a "Hindu Temple," shouted at his helpers, and in the heat of inspiration even railed at the stage-manager, who wanted to draw his attention to something.

He was untamable, irresponsible, and great. Dirtier and more unkempt than ever, he strutted through his workroom at the back of the stage, painted the superbly beautiful, fantastic "Temple," and lived through the happiness of inspiration. His whole appearance, excited by the sleepless night full of inspiration, was the embodiment of power and passionate energy: the pale

face with the blue discoloration under the eye, the bristling locks, and the flaming eyes that seemed to emanate blue rays—all this showed that the inspiration of Kostovsky did not flash up for a moment, but that it burned long and steadily with an inexhaustible, even light.

He was wholly engrossed by his "Temple," when he suddenly felt close to him some one's light step, and an exquisite perfume was wafted to where he stood. He turned around—before him stood Julia.

She wore the costume of a ballet-dancer, that is, almost no costume, as she had to dance at the rehearsal. She was a pretty little thing in pink tights, white satin slippers, and short gauze skirts; her high, strong bosom heaved tranquilly and peacefully, and her creamy face smiled. Her black, almond-shaped, languid eyes looked tenderly and promisingly at Kostovsky. In the costume of a ballet-dancer she looked like a being just out of fairyland, and it was difficult to imagine a being so totally different from Kostovsky as was this fairy. She was all exquisite grace and litheness; he, ungainly, dark, and big, stood before her abashed and confused, and gazed at her with delight and admiration; the long brush was lowered to the floor to her feet.

Kostovsky forgot his work, and Julia broke into a ringing laugh, and, sparkling with her sharp little teeth, she came nearer to him with her light, graceful step, and, stretching out to him her beautiful little hand, she boldly said: "How do you do, Kostovsky!"

. . . . . .

Several months passed. The enormous opera-house was crowded to the doors. Behind the scenes they were hot at work, crowding one another, bustling and pushing. Through the curtain came the hum of the public and the solemn waves of the orchestra music.

The stage-workmen ran about like men possessed, adjusting and shifting the scenery, and from somewhere in the darkness above rose and descended enormous canvases, the walls of temples, steeples, woods, and sea-waves.

All this work was superintended by Kostovsky. He was unrecognizable, his face looked years younger and brighter, his blue eyes were alight with joy and happiness, his feet were encased in shiny patent-leather boots, and he wore a well-fitting, elegant velvet jacket; his fair locks were no longer bristling.

"Let down the bottom of the sea!" he commanded in a ringing voice.

The enormous canvas on which was depicted the bottom of the sea was lowered. The decorator retreated a few steps and once more looked lovingly at the "sea bottom." This was his latest creation.

"Listen, Pavel!" he shouted, "when the mermaids begin to swim, you will let Julia come first and lower than all the rest; let her down to the very bottom!"

"It shall be done!"

At last everything was ready for the mermaids to swim through the bottom of the sea. Kostovsky was already on the elevation, with the electric reflector turned on the stage; he himself had to manage the lighting up of the scenery and the actors. The "Bot-

tom of the Sea" became suffused with a tender, poetic light. This greenish-silvery light seemed to penetrate the water as if with the bright sunlit day above. And here at the bottom everything lived, knowing no light. In the distance stood a coral-reef, and everywhere half-alive vegetation greedily stretched its branches over the water, and all around floated slimy medusœ.

Underneath, the first thing to meet the eye was the yawning mouth of a submarine cave, from which were thrust out the arms of a hideous, enormous devil-fish that, without moving, glared out of its two green eyes.

And from amid this primitive, abnormal world appeared a wonderfully beautiful woman with flowing hair and bare shoulders, with the form of a fish below the waist, covered with shining, silvery scales. The loveliness of her head and the beauty of her shoulders was enhanced by the ugliness of the submarine world.

She swam like a fish, easily and gracefully, turning and twisting, her scales sparkling and glittering; she was followed by another mermaid, a whole school.

Lighted by the rays of the reflector, at the will of Kostovsky, they became marvelous, fairy-like beauties.

But they were all eclipsed by one. She swam lower than all, and was distinguished from all by the radiance of her beauty. She was lighted better and more alluringly than the rest, the tenderest rays of the reflector warmly and lovingly fell upon her, ran after her, and lovingly caressed her graceful body, adding a seductive expression to her face and making her eyes shine like stars. She seemed to be created of light, and this light changed with every moment, and she

changed with it, garbed in thousands of different tints. A veritable queen of the deep. She felt that the enchanter decorator had bestowed on her a marvelous loveliness, that the delighted public was ready to break forth into a storm of applause in honor of this beauty, and, swimming close to the decorator, she gratefully waved her sparkling fish-tail, over which, by the will of the generous, enamored decorator, suddenly fell a shower of many-colored diamonds.

She swam behind the scenes, and he, rising on tiptoe and smiling happily, sent her an airy kiss from behind the reflector.

All in the company knew of this love affair behind the scenes: Julia always left the theatre in the company of Kostovsky, they stayed at the same hotel, and his room adjoined hers. Kostovsky was always with her, enjoying to the full the pleasure that the contemplation of her beauty afforded him, while she willingly allowed him to pay court to her. He followed her like a faithful dog, and waited long and patiently at the door of the women's dressing-room while she leisurely removed the make-up from her face, dressed, and chatted with the other girls.

This time, after the conclusion of the performance, he had to wait particularly long at the foot of the stairs; one after another the closely wrapped little figures came down the stairs and went off with the men who were awaiting them, just as the scene-painter was awaiting Julia. But "she" was not to be seen.

Sad and troubled, Kostovsky stood at his place, looking about him indifferently and continually throwing

expectant glances at the door of the dressing-room. And the door opened less and less often, as almost all the women had already departed.

At last Rosa, a vivacious Jewish chorus girl, came out. "What are you standing here for?" she drawled, lifting her brows in surprise and making a sly grimace. "I am the very last one, there is no one else, and Julia left long ago. It seems you did not notice when she went out."

"What, is she gone?" asked Kostovsky, and on his face appeared a pained expression.

"Ha-ha-ha!" Rosa's silvery laugh rang out; "very simple, she left before the end of the performance in the company of her new admirer, and you, my sweet one, have tired her long ago!"

The scene-painter stepped back and caught himself by the head. "It is not true!" he said in a dull voice.

"Well, I like that!" Rosa said excitedly, "and it is your own doing, too! She only wished to be pushed ahead. You always light her up so that the whole front row is after her! She has made a career for herself, and does not need you any longer." And Rosa ran laughingly down the stairs.

Kostovsky stood long motionless on the same place, and, enveloped in the quiet and darkness of the empty theatre, he felt that, little by little, then stronger and stronger, his breast was filled with acute pain.

When Kostovsky knocked at the door of Julia's room she received him very coldly. Her moist eyes looked indifferently and tranquilly from under her thick, black eyelashes; her black hair, care-

lessly pinned, lay like a luxurious crown, and two thick curls fell over her full cheeks. She wore a wide kimono of some cheap sheer material, and light slippers.

"Julia," whispered Kostovsky, breathless with excitement.

"Sit down!" she said carelessly, not noticing anything especial in his appearance, and added: "And try to occupy yourself with something. I really haven't any time to entertain you."

"Julia!"

She half-leaned upon the bed and became wholly absorbed in her book.

He was irritated by this woman's unnecessary artfulness; why use these artifices, which offended him the more, because she could easily tell him outright and settle it?

"Julia, you speak to me as to a visitor who has to be entertained? Why this ceremony?"

"There is no ceremony about it!" she replied in a displeased tone. "It—simplifies our relations, that is all: every one occupies himself—with what he pleases. I am—reading. And you occupy yourself with something else, and if you feel ennui—go away."

She was driving him out.

Kostovsky was beside himself with rage at this "simplifying of relations," and at her sudden leaving off of the familiar "thou" and adopting the more conventional "you."

"Listen to me," he said, in a voice full of irritation, and likewise availing himself of the term "you." "I

wish to speak to you, and will not wait till you finish reading."

She did not reply, and, half-reclining on the bed, she continued looking at the open book. A painful silence ensued.

Kostovsky sat at the table and quietly gazed at Julia. Leaning on her elbows on the pillow, she had thrown herself into a graceful, kittenish pose, her little feet encased in their tiny, light slippers, impishly hid under the folds of her kimono, and from their hiding-place teased Kostovsky. The lovely curves of her body showed through the thin dress, the wide sleeves left visible her chubby arms to the elbow; and she was, as a whole, so sweet and graceful that Kostovsky, hating her at this moment, longed to take her in his arms.

He turned his eyes away from her. The room was poorly furnished—a cheap hotel room, lighted by electricity. Near the door stood the wardrobe with her costumes, in the centre the table, and near the window the dresser and a mirror. On a rack close to the entrance into the room hung her plush jacket, trimmed with tiny cats' paws. He looked long and with hatred at this jacket with its cats' paws, and recalled how amiably she used to meet him before, forcing him into a chair and smoothing his bristly locks tenderly, and how pleasant it was to feel the tender touch of the little hand.

She quickly flung away her book, and angrily rose from the bed. "You have nothing to speak to me about!" she exclaimed, reddening. "Everything has

been said already! It is time to end this spoony love affair, this sentimental driveling!"

"Spooniness—sentimental driveling," he bitterly repeated. "Julia! What has come between us?"

"There is nothing between us, nothing could be!" she energetically declared. "We have nothing in common—nothing whatsoever—and—we must put an end to our acquaintanceship!"

She gave the table a push and sat down in the darkest corner of the room, looking at him from there with her large, black eyes. Her eyes had always the same expression; no matter at whom they looked, they seemed to be inviting and promising something without the knowledge of their possessor. Spurning him, she at the same time lured him on.

"I understand!" he spoke sadly, and pushed his chair close to her. "You wish to part with me; they say you have another—some one from the first row of the orchestra. Well, let us part. But why all this subterfuge and why quarrel? I do not wish that all this should end so badly—with a quarrel. I wish at least to keep the memory. But, Julia, know that all those—from the first row—despise you—humiliate you —love in you only the flesh. And I— Why I—l-o-v-e you, the devil take you, accursed one!"

He grasped her arm above the elbow and shook her with his large paws.

"Phui! How rude! He abuses me! Let me go! Let me go, I say; you will dislocate my arm! Ruffian!"

She longed to quarrel with him. And he, on his

part, felt an influx of ferocious wrath, a passionate longing to tear, lacerate, beat, and throw her out.

He grasped her arms still tighter. His eyes turned a greenish color, his teeth gave out a grating sound.

"Ai!" she cried. But he fell on his knees before her.

"Sweetest, dearest, my golden one, my sun, my joy! You are my—all; all my thoughts, all my feelings, everything is for you, from you, and—about you! Oh, I am rude; I am—a brute, but I love you! Without you there is no life for me; I will again sink to the bottom from which you raised me! Well, darling, well, my happiness, forgive me. You see I kiss your hands, your dress. Forgive!"

And on his bent knees this big, powerful man caught the tiny hands of the tiny woman and kissed them, kissed her dress, and wept.

When he lifted his head he suddenly caught her glance directed toward him, a strange, attentive glance. In this glance of her moist, black eyes there was no love, nor pity for him; nor even contempt, but something offensive, resembling curiosity, but more heartless than curiosity. It was the curiosity of a vivisectionist, the curiosity he exhibits when dissecting a live rabbit, or that of a naturalist when he sticks his pin through a rare beetle, and looks on at its contortions. He even now interested her—but only as something primitive, original: his sharp transitions from rudeness to tenderness, the strangeness of the declaration, the sudden fits of ferocious rage only to humble himself before her and to weep a moment later—all this was very interesting.

But Kostovsky's mind was suddenly illuminated, as if by lightning: he understood all at once the real relation of Julia toward him, and felt that he had received a deadly wound at her hands, that she was only interested in him, but she had never loved him, could not love him; that she was a being from a world other than his—that he was a total stranger to her. The words died away in his heart. He grew silent, caught his hat, and without another glance at Julia rushed out of the room and the hotel.

Kostovsky found himself suddenly in a dirty dramshop, where his steps had almost unconsciously led him. He had not drunk for a long time, but now he felt a terrible necessity for the dramshop, the noise, the clinking of the glasses, and the smell of bad vodka.

He sat in a corner of the dramshop, alone, at a small table. Before him stood a large bottle of vodka and the noxious side-dishes peculiar to such resorts. The dirty table-cloth was stained with vodka and beer, and the kerosene hanging-lamp dimly lighted the room, filled with tipsy people. They were all bawling, drinking, and clinking their glasses; the pale-faced waiters ran around, serving the drinks, and in the adjoining room cracked the billiard-balls, and some one of the players, whenever he hit the ball, sang out in a merry tenor voice a popular song: "Wherever I go, or stroll, I see only Ju-li-a, only Ju-li-a."

"Oh, the devil!" muttered Kostovsky, pouring out the tenth glass, and gloomily draining it. He was irritated because even here in the dramshop "she" was persecuting him. He had decided to "forget" her for

evermore: he hated and despised her, and did not wish to remember her at all.

The dramshop enveloped him in its sounds and smells, and eased his suffering with its well-known coloring of something intimate, free, something he had lived through in the past.

But, little by little, his thoughts withdrew from the dramshop, and "she" appeared once more, and would no longer leave him.

She was now in the costume of a "mermaid," with the body of a fish covered with silver scales, radiant under the many colored rays of the reflector, seductively beautiful. She lured him after her with her enticing smile, and swam away far, far into the boundless sea. And the man in love with a mermaid felt that he was perishing, that he would never more return to his former carelessness, power, and strength of soul. And he recollected his former life before he knew the mermaid and her kisses. True, he had caroused then, but that was not drunkenness, it was dare-deviltry, his power was seeking a free outlet. His heart was athirst for dash and merriment. So, like the legendary fisherman, he had found in his net a mermaid. He lifted her in his arms, kissed and caressed her, and—good-by to carefree life! The man was ruined by the mermaid!

"Oh, devil!" Kostovsky roared, draining his glass, and thinking thereby to drive off the troublesome thoughts; but "she" continued to torture him pitilessly, appearing before him every moment in another costume, now as a fairy, a shepherdess, and again as

a mermaid, or she swam close to him in a wide house-gown, and her thick, black curls fell over her forehead and upon her full, pink cheeks. And her whole figure was as if flooded by radiant, poetic rays.

"And when with friends I drain the heady cup, I see before me all the while Julia, Julia," came from the billiard-room the merry, tenor voice. Gradually the dramshop filled with a mist, through which the lights burned very low, and the noise of the revelers reached but indistinctly and seemed far off, resembling faraway sea-breakers. The dramshop filled with sea-waves, which rose and fell. And from the waves swam out a mermaid who was laughingly luring Kostovsky to her.

For a moment he lifted his head, and again saw before him the bottle, poured out another glass, and drained it; the mist became denser, rolled before his eyes. But he still saw, rising amidst the wine-vapors high over the bottle, her poetic, sweet image.

. . . . . .

When Kostovsky was at last found again after a search of several days in the different dramshops of the city, and brought to his senses, the opera, with its "sea-bottom" and mermaids, was again produced.

Now Kostovsky once more looked his old self: the unkempt, carelessly dressed scene-painter was even more gloomy than before; his locks bristled and his mustaches stood on end worse than ever.

He stood gloomily on his elevation behind the scenes, lighting up the mermaids with the rays from his reflector. His soul was filled with cold and gloom

and obduracy. Now he himself kept aloof from everybody, hated the whole troupe, and lived alone.

And the "mermaids" swam over the "sea-bottom."

But it was no longer the former radiant, poetic light which shone upon them; the light which the decorator threw upon them now was a sad, pale light, and under its rays they seemed inanimate, sickly, and half-dead.

But when Julia appeared—swimming as formerly lower than the rest—sinister, dark-blue rays came pouring upon her, and she looked more like a fury than a mermaid. Her face was blue, horrible, with black lips and black cavities instead of eyes, and the slippery fish-body was as if covered with a loathsome slime.

A mutter of disgust ran through the theatre.

And the decorator also lit up with the same light the "sea-bottom" with all its monsters; and like a symbol of nightmare and sadness the green-eyed devil-fish came out of the darkness, and the noxious medusas began to move around.

The blue body of Julia seemed to swim in this loathsome mass, and at last blended with it into one living, monstrous, deformed creature.

The scene-painter slowly turned the glasses of the reflector, gazed upon the work of the light he had created, and it seemed to him that he had destroyed forever the former charm of the woman—that she whom he had loved had never been beautiful; and it seemed to him that now only he saw her in her real light, and that she only became divinely beautiful when lighted by the bright rays of his love.

VALIA

BY LEONID ANDREIEV

Leonid Andreiev is a talented member of the youngest school of Russian literature. He was born at Oriol in 1871. He studied law at the universities of St. Petersburg and Moscow and graduated in 1897. He wrote some stories while still a student, but did not meet with recognition until 1898, when he wholly abandoned his unsuccessful career as a lawyer and devoted himself to literature.

Andreiev, like some of the other young Russian writers, Gorki included, is groping his way—his talent has not yet adopted a permanent manner. He has two distinctly different styles, one symbolic and elusive, the other clear and sane, though melancholy. It may interest some readers to compare his "Valia" with Frapié's story in the volume of French short stories in this series.

VALIA

BY LEONID ANDREIEV

VALIA was reading a huge, very huge book, almost half as large as himself, with very black letters and pictures occupying the entire page. To see the top line Valia had to stretch out his neck, lean far over the table, kneeling in his chair, and putting his short chubby finger on the letters for fear they would be lost among the other ones like it, in which case it was a difficult task to find them again. Owing to these circumstances, unforeseen by the publishers, the reading advanced very slowly, notwithstanding the breath-catching interest of the book.

It was a story about a very strong boy whose name was Prince Bova, and who could, by merely grasping the legs or arms of other boys, wrench them away from the body.

But Valia was suddenly interrupted in his reading; his mother entered with some other woman.

"Here he is," said his mother, her eyes red with weeping. The tears had evidently been shed very recently as she was still crushing a white lace handkerchief in her hand.

"Valichka, darling!" exclaimed the other woman, and putting her arms about his head, she began to kiss his face and eyes, pressing her thin, hard lips to

Translated by Lizzie B. Gorin. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

them. She did not fondle him as did his mother, whose kisses were soft and melting; this one seemed loath to let go of him. Valia accepted her pricking caresses with a frown and silence; he was very much displeased at being interrupted, and he did not at all like this strange woman, tall, with bony, long fingers upon which there was not even one ring. And she smelled so bad: a damp, moldy smell, while his mother always exhaled a fresh, exquisite perfume.

At last the woman left him in peace, and while he was wiping his lips she looked him over with that quick sort of glance which seemed to photograph one. His short nose with its indication of a future little hump, his thick, unchildish brows over dark eyes, and the general appearance of stern seriousness, recalled some one to her, and she began to cry. Even her weeping was unlike mama's: the face remained immovable while the tears quickly rolled down one after the other—before one had time to fall another was already chasing after it. Her tears ceased as suddenly as they had commenced, and she asked: "Valichka, do you know me?"—"No."

"I called to see you. Twice I called to see you."

Perhaps she had called upon him, perhaps she had called twice, but how should Valia know of it? With her questions she only hindered him from reading.

"I am your mama, Valia!" said the woman.

Valia looked around in astonishment to find his mama, but she was no longer in the room.

"Why, can there be two mamas?" he asked. "What nonsense you are telling me."

The woman laughed, but this laugh did not please Valia; it was evident that the woman did not wish to laugh at all, and did it purposely to fool him. For some moments they were both silent.

"And what book is it you are reading?"

"About Prince Bova," Valia informed her with serious self-esteem and an evident respect for the big book.

"Ach, it must be very interesting! Tell me, please!" the woman asked with an ingratiating smile.

And once more something unnatural and false sounded in this voice, which tried to be soft and round like the voice of his mother, but remained sharp and prickly. The same insincerity appeared also in all the movements of the woman; she turned on her chair and even stretched out her neck with a manner as if preparing for a long and attentive listening; and when Valia reluctantly began the story, she immediately retired within herself, like a dark-lantern on which the cover is suddenly thrown. Valia felt the offense toward himself and Prince Bova, but, wishing to be polite, he quickly finished the story and added: "That is all."

"Well, good-by, my dear, my dove!" said the strange woman, and once more pressed her lips to Valia's face. "I shall soon call again. Will you be glad?"

"Yes, come please," politely replied Valia, and to get rid of her more quickly he added: "I will be very glad."

The visitor left him, but hardly had Valia found in the book again the word at which he had been in-

terrupted, when mama entered, looked at him, and she also began to weep. He could easily understand why the other woman should have wept; she must have been sorry that she was so unpleasant and tiresome—but why should his mama weep?

"Listen, mama," he said musingly, "how that woman bored me! She says that she is my mama. Why, could there be two mamas to one boy?"

"No, baby, there could not; but she speaks the truth; she is your mother."

"And what are you, then?"

"I am your auntie."

This was a very unexpected discovery, but Valia received it with unshakable indifference; auntie, well, let it be auntie—was it not just the same? A word did not, as yet, have the same meaning for him as it would for a grown person. But his former mother did not understand it, and began to explain why it had so happened that she had been a mother and had become an aunt. Once, very long ago, when Valia was very, very little—

"How little? So?" Valia raised his hand about a quarter of a yard from the table. "Like Kiska?" Valia exclaimed, joyfully surprised, with mouth half opened and brow lifted. He spoke of his white kitten that had been presented to him.

"Yes."

Valia broke into a happy laugh, but immediately resumed his usual earnestness, and with the condescension of a grown person recalling the mistakes of his youth, he remarked: "How funny I must have been!"

When he was so very little and funny, like Kiska, he had been brought by that woman and given away forever, also like Kiska. And now, when he had become so big and clever, the woman wanted him.

"Do you wish to go to her?" asked his former mother and reddened with joy when Valia resolutely and sternly said: "No, she does not please me!" and once more took up his book.

Valia considered the affair closed, but he was mistaken. This strange woman, with a face as devoid of life as if all the blood had been drained out of it, who had appeared from no one knew where, and vanished without leaving a trace, seemed to have set the whole house in turmoil and filled it with a dull alarm. Mama-auntie often cried and repeatedly asked Valia if he wished to leave her; uncle-papa grumbled, patted his bald pate so that the sparse, gray hair on it stood up, and when auntie-mama was absent from the room he also asked Valia if he would like to go to that woman. Once, in the evening, when Valia was already in his little bed but was not yet sleeping, he heard his uncle and auntie speaking of him and the woman. The uncle spoke in an angry basso at which the crystal pendants of the chandelier gently trembled and sparkled with bluish and reddish lights.

"You speak nonsense, Nastasia Philippovna. We have no right to give the child away."

"She loves him, Grisha."

"And we! Do we not love him? You are arguing very strangely, Nastasia Philippovna. It seems as if you would be glad to get rid of the child—"

"Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"Well, well, how quick you are to take offense. Just consider this matter cold-bloodedly and reasonably. Some frivolous thing or other gives birth to children, light-heartedly disposes of them by placing them on your threshold, and afterward says: 'Kindly give me my child, because, on account of my lover having abandoned me, I feel lonesome. For theatres and concerts I have no money, so give me the child to serve as a toy to play with.' No, madam, be easy, we shall see who wins in this case!"

"You are unjust to her, Grisha. You know well how ill and lonely she is—"

"You, Nastasia Philippovna, can make even a saint lose patience, by God! And the child you seem to have forgotten? For you is it wholly immaterial whether he is brought up an honest man or a scoundrel? And I could bet my head that he would be brought up by her a scoundrel, rascal, and—scoundrel."

"Grisha!"

"I ask you, for God's sake, not to irritate me! And where did you get this devilish habit of contradicting? 'She is so lonely.' And are *we* not lonely? The heartless woman that you are, Nastasia Philippovna! And why the devil did I marry you!"

The heartless woman broke into tears, and her husband immediately begged her pardon, declaring that only a born fool could pay any attention to the words of such an old ass as he was. Gradually she became calmer and asked: "What does Talonsky say?"

"And what makes you think that he is such a clever

fellow?" Gregory Aristarchovich again flew into a passion. "He says that everything depends on how the court will look at it.... Something new, is it not, as if we did not know without his telling that everything depends on how the court will look at it! Of course it matters little to him—what does he care?—he will have his bark and then safely go his way. If I had *my* way, it would go ill with all these empty talkers—"

But here Nastasia Philippovna shut the dining-room door and Valia did not hear the end of the conversation. But he lay for a long time with open eyes, trying to understand what sort of woman it was who wished to take him away from his home and ruin him.

On the next day he waited from early morning expecting his auntie to ask him if he wished to go to his mother; but auntie did not ask. Neither did his uncle. Instead of this, they both gazed at Valia as if he were dangerously ill and would soon die; they caressed him and brought him large books with colored pictures. The woman did not call any more, but it seemed to Valia that she must be lurking outside the door watching for him, and that as soon as he would pass the threshold she would seize him and carry him out into a black and dismal distance where cruel monsters were wriggling and breathing fire.

In the evenings while his uncle Gregory Aristarchovich was occupied in his study and Nastasia Philippovna was knitting something, or playing a game of solitaire, Valia read his books, in which the lines would grow gradually thicker and the letters smaller. Everything in the room was quiet, so quiet

that the only thing to be heard was the rustling of the pages he turned, and occasionally the uncle's loud cough from the study, or the striking of the abacus counters. The lamp, with its blue shade, threw a bright light on the blue plush table-cover, but the corners of the room were full of a quiet, mysterious gloom. There stood large plants with curious leaves and roots crawling out upon the surface and looking very much like fighting serpents, and it seemed as if something large and dark was moving amidst them. Valia read, and before his wide-open eyes passed terrible, beautiful and sad images which awakened in him pity and love, but more often fear. Valia was sorry for the poor water-nymph who so dearly loved the handsome prince that for him she had given up her sisters and the deep, peaceful ocean; and the prince knew nothing of this love, because the poor water-nymph was dumb, and so he married a gay princess; and while great festivities in honor of the wedding were in full swing on board the ship, and music was playing and all were enjoying themselves, the poor water-nymph threw herself into the dark waves to die. Poor, sweet little water-nymph, so quiet and sad, and modest! But often terrible, cruel, human monsters appeared before Valia. In the dark nights they flew somewhere on their prickly wings, and the air whistled over their heads, and their eyes burned like red-hot coals. And afterward, they were surrounded by other monsters like themselves while a mysterious and terrible something was happening there. Laughter as sharp as a knife, long and pitiful

wailing; strange weird dances in the purplish light of torches, their slanty, fiery tongues wrapped in the red clouds of smoke; and dead men with long, black beards— All this was the manifestation of a single enigmatic and cruel power, wishing to destroy man. Angry and mysterious spectres filled the air, hid among the plants, whispered something, and pointed their bony fingers at Valia; they gazed at him from behind the door of the adjoining unlit room, giggled and waited till he would go to bed, when they would silently dart around over his head; they peeped at him from out of the garden through the large, dark windows, and wailed sorrowfully with the wind.

In and out among all this vicious and terrible throng appeared the image of that woman who had come for Valia. Many people came and went in the house of Gregory Aristarchovich, and Valia did not remember their faces, but this face lived in his memory. It was such an elongated, thin, yellow face, and smiled with a sly, dissembling smile, from which two deep lines appeared at the two corners of the mouth. If this woman took Valia he would die.

"Listen," Valia once said to his aunt, tearing himself away from his book for a moment. "Listen," he repeated with his usual earnestness, and with a glance that gazed straight into the eyes of the person with whom he spoke: "I shall call you mama, not auntie. You talk nonsense when you say that the woman—is mama. You are mama, not she."

"Why?" asked Nastasia Philippovna, blushing like a young girl who had just received a compliment. But

along with her joy there could also be heard in her voice the sound of fear for Valia. He had become so strange of late, and timid; feared to sleep alone, as he used to do, raved in his sleep and cried.

"But, Valichka, it is true, she is your mother."

"I really wonder where you get this habit of contradicting!" Valia said after some musing, imitating the tone of Gregory Aristarchovich.

Nastasia Philippovna laughed, but while preparing for bed that night she spoke for a considerable time with her husband, who boomed like a Turkish drum, abused the empty talkers, and frivolous, hair-brained women, and afterward went with his wife to see Valia.

They gazed long and silently into the face of the sleeping child. The flame of the candle swayed in the trembling hand of Gregory Aristarchovich and lent a fantastic, death-like coloring to the face of the boy, which was as white as the pillows on which it rested. It seemed as if a pair of stern, black eyes looked at them from the dark hollows, demanding a reply and threatening them with misfortune and unknown sorrow, and the lips twitched into a strange, ironic smile as if upon his helpless child-head lay a vague reflection of those cruel and mysterious spectre monsters that silently hovered over it.

"Valia!" whispered the frightened Nastasia. The boy sighed deeply but did not move, as if enchained in the sleep of death.

"Valia! Valia!" the deep, trembling voice of her husband was added to that of Nastasia Philippovna.

Valia opened his eyes, shaded by thick eyelashes;

the light of the candle made him wink, and he sprang to his knees, pale and frightened. His uncovered, thin little arms, like a pearl necklace encircled his auntie's full, rosy neck, and hiding his little head upon her breast and screwing up his eyes tight as if fearing that they would open of themselves, he whispered: "I am afraid, mama, I am afraid! Do not go!"

That was a bad night for the whole household; when Valia at last fell asleep, Gregory Aristarchovich got an attack of asthma. He choked, and his full, white breast rose and fell spasmodically under the ice compresses. Toward morning he grew more tranquil, and the worn Nastasia fell asleep with the thought that her husband would not survive the loss of the child.

After a family council at which it was decided that Valia ought to read less and to see more of children of his own age, little girls and boys were brought to the house to play with him. But Valia from the first conceived a dislike for these foolish children who, in his eyes, were too noisy, loud and indecorous. They pulled flowers, tore books, jumped over chairs, and fought like little monkeys; and he, serious and thoughtful, looked on at their pranks with amazement and displeasure, and, going up to Nastasia Philippovna, said: "They tire me! I would rather sit by you."

And in the evenings he once more took up his book, and when Gregory Aristarchovich, grumbling at all the deviltry the child read about, and by which he was losing his senses, gently tried to take the book from Valia's hands, the child silently and irresolutely

pressed it to himself. And the improvised pedagogue beat a confused retreat and angrily scolded his wife:

"Is this what you call bringing up! No, Nastasia Philippovna, I see you are more fit to take care of kittens than to bring up children. The boy is so spoiled that one can not even take a book away from him."

One morning while Valia was sitting at breakfast with Nastasia Philippovna, Gregory Aristarchovich suddenly came rushing into the dining-room. His hat was tilted on the back of his head, his face was covered with perspiration; while still at the other side of the door he shouted joyfully into the room:

"Refused! The court has refused!"

The diamond earrings in Nastasia Philippovna's ears began to sparkle, and the little knife she held in her hand dropped to the plate with a clatter.

"Is it true?" she asked, breathlessly.

Gregory Aristarchovich made a serious face, just to show that he had spoken the truth, but immediately forgetting his intention, his face became covered with a whole network of merry wrinkles. Then once more remembering that he lacked that earnestness of demeanor with which important news is usually imparted, he frowned, pushed a chair up to the table, placed his hat upon it, forgot that it was his hat, and thinking the chair to be already occupied by some one, threw a stern look at Nastasia Philippovna, then on Valia, winked his eye at Valia; and only after all these solemn preliminaries did he declare:

"I always said that Talonsky was a devilish clever fellow; can't fool him easily, Nastasia Philippovna."

"So it is true?"

"You are always ready with your eternal doubts. I said the case of Mme. Akimova is dismissed. Clever, is it not, little brother?" he turned to Valia and added in a stern, official tone: "And that said Akimova is to pay the costs."

"That woman will not take me, then?"

"I guess she won't, brother mine! Ach, I have entirely forgotten, I brought you some books!"

Gregory Aristarchovich rushed into the corridor, but halted on hearing Nastasia Philippovna's scream. Valia had fallen back on his chair in a faint.

A happy time began for the family. It was as if some one who had lain dangerously ill in the house had suddenly recovered and all began to breathe more easily and freely. Valia lost his fear of the terrible monsters and no longer suffered from nightmares. When the little monkeys, as he called the children, came to see him again, he was the most inventive of the lot. But even into the most fantastic plays he introduced his habitual earnestness and staidness, and when they played Indians, he found it indispensable to divest himself of almost all his clothing and cover his body with red paint.

In view of the businesslike manner in which these games were conducted, Gregory Aristarchovich now found it possible to participate in them, as far as his abilities allowed. In the rôle of a bear he did not appear to great advantage, but he had a great and well deserved success in his rôle of elephant. And when Valia, silent and earnest as a true son of the Goddess

Cali, sat upon his father's shoulders and gently tapped upon his rosy bald pate with a tiny toy hammer, he really reminded one of a little Eastern prince who despotically reigns over people and animals.

The lawyer Talonsky tried to convey a hint to Gregory Aristarchovich that all was not safe yet, but the former could not comprehend how three judges could reverse the decision of three other judges, when the laws are the same here and everywhere. And when the lawyer insisted, Gregory Aristarchovich grew angry, and to prove that there was nothing to be feared from the higher court, he brought forward that same Talonsky on whom he now implicitly relied:

"Why, are you not going to be present when the case is brought before the court? Well, then what is there to be talked about. I wish you, Nastasia Philippovna, would make him ashamed of himself."

Talonsky smiled, and Nastasia Philippovna gently chided him for his purposeless doubts. They also spoke of the woman who had caused all the trouble, but now that she could menace them no more, and the court had decided that she must bear all the costs of the trial, they often dubbed her "poor woman."

Since the day Valia had heard that the woman had no longer any power to take him, she had lost in his eyes the halo of mysterious fear, which enveloped her like a mist and distorted the features of her thin face, and Valia began to think of her as he did of all other people. He now repeatedly heard that she was unhappy and could not understand why; but this pale bloodless face grew more simple, natural and near

to him, the "poor woman," as they called her, began to interest him, and recalling other poor women of whom he had read, he felt a growing pity and a timid tenderness for her.

He imagined that she must sit alone in some dark room, fearing something and weeping, always weeping, as she had wept then when she had come to see him. And he felt sorry that he had not told her the story of Prince Bova better than he had at the time.

. . . . . .

It appeared that three judges could, after all, disagree with the decision of three other judges. The higher court had reversed the decision of the district court, the child was adjudged to his real mother. And the appeal was not considered by the senate.

When the woman came to take Valia away with her, Gregory Aristarchovich was not at home, he was at Talonsky's house and was lying in Talonsky's bedroom, and only the bald, rosy pate was visible above the sea of snow-white pillows.

Nastasia Philippovna did not leave her room, and the maid led Valia forth from it already dressed for the road. He wore a fur coat and tall overshoes in which he moved his feet with difficulty. From under his fur cap looked out a pale little face with a frank and serious expression in the dark eyes. Under his arm Valia carried a book in which was the story of a poor water-nymph.

The tall, gaunt woman pressed the boy to her shabby coat and sobbed out: "How you have grown, Valichka! You are unrecognizable," she said, trying

to joke, but Valia adjusted his cap and, contrary to habit, did not look into the eyes of the one who from this day on was to be his mother, but into her mouth. It was large, but with beautiful, small teeth; the two wrinkles on the corners of the mouth were still on the same place where Valia had seen them first, only now they were deeper.

"You are not angry with me?" asked mama; but Valia, not replying to her question, said: "Let us be gone."

"Valichka!" came a pitiful scream from Nastasia Philippovna's room, and she appeared on the threshold with eyes swollen from weeping, and clasping her hands she rushed toward the child, sank on her knees, and put her head on his shoulder. She did not utter a sound, only the diamonds in her ears trembled.

"Come, Valia," sternly said the tall woman, taking his hand. "We must not remain any longer among people who have subjected your mother to such torture —such torture!"

Her dry voice was full of hatred and she longed to strike the kneeling woman with her foot.

"Ugh! heartless wretches! You would be glad to take even my only child from me!" she wrathfully whispered, and pulled Valia away by his hand. "Come! Don't be like your father, who abandoned me."

"Ta-ke ca-re of him," Nastasia called after them.

The hired sleigh which stood waiting for them flew softly and lightly over the snow and noiselessly carried Valia away from the quiet house with its wonderful plants and flowers, its mysterious fairy-tale world, immeasurable and deep as the sea, with its windows

gently screened by the boughs of the tall trees of the garden. Soon the house was lost in the mass of other houses, as similar to each other as the letters in Valia's book, and vanished forever from Valia.

It seemed to him as if they were swimming in a river, the banks of which were constituted of rows of lanterns as close to each other as beads on a string, but when they approached nearer, the beads were scattered, forming large, dark spaces and merging behind into just such a line of light. And then Valia thought that they were standing motionless on the very same spot; and everything began to be like a fairy tale—he himself and the tall woman who was pressing him to her with her bony hand, and everything around him.

The hand in which he carried his book was getting stiff with cold, but he would not ask his mother to take the book from him.

The small room into which Valia's mother had taken him was untidy and hot; in a corner near the large bed stood a little curtained bed such as Valia had not slept in for a long, long time.

"You are frozen! Well, wait, we shall soon have some tea! Well, now you are with your mama. Are you glad?" his mother asked with the hard, unpleasant look of one who has been forced to smile beneath blows all her life long.

"No," Valia replied shyly, frightened at his own frankness.

"No? And I had bought some toys for you. Just look, there they are on the window.

Valia approached the window and examined the

toys. They were wretched paper horses with straight, thick legs, Punch with a red cap on, with an idiotically grinning face and a large nose, and little tin soldiers with one foot raised in the air.

Valia had long ago given up playing with toys and did not like them, but from politeness he did not show it to his mother. "Yes, they are nice toys," he said.

She noticed the glance he threw at the window, and said with that unpleasant, ingratiating smile:

"I did not know what you liked, darling, and I bought them for you a long time ago."

Valia was silent, not knowing what to reply.

"You must know that I am all alone, Valia, all alone in the wide world; I have no one whose advice I could ask; I thought they would please you." Valia was silent.

Suddenly the muscles of the woman's face relaxed and the tears began to drop from her eyes, quickly, quickly, one after the other; and she threw herself on the bed which gave a pitiful squeak under the weight of her body, and with one hand pressed to her breast, the other to her temples, she looked vacantly through the wall with her pale, faded eyes, and whispered:

"He was not pleased! Not pleased!—"

Valia promptly approached the bed, put his little hand, still red with the cold, on the large head of his mother, and spoke with the same serious staidness which distinguished this boy's speech:

"Do not cry, mama. I will love you very much. I do not care to play with toys, but I will love you ever so much. If you wish, I will read to you the story of the poor water-nymph."